WHO IS BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE FORMULA 1 DRIVER?

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

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Find out the results of MN's exclusive poll, starts page 18

Mixed surface discipline to break new ground in British motorsport this season with new entries

BRITISH RALLYCROSS TO INCLUDE ELECTRIC ENTRIES FOR 2021

EXCLUSIVE

Electric power will feature in BRX

By Hal Ridge

The British Rallycross Championship will become the first series in the United Kingdom to adopt electric cars into its highest level.

Electric machines will compete directly against the existing internal combustion engine Supercars on a level playing field.

The governing body, Motorsport UK, is in the final stages of approving the use of electric cars into the discipline, based on the four-wheel-drive, three-motor, 450kW electric powertrain developed by former World Rally Championship star Manfred Stohl's firm, STARD.

Cars using STARD's powertrain system were raced in the Projekt E support category to the World Rallycross Championship last season.

Electric cars are expected to compete in the British RX 5 Nations trophy this year from the opening round at Lydden Hill on May 29. Reigning Projekt E champion Natalie Barratt is among those hoping to take part.

Full story, page 11

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT MOTORSPORT NEWS

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TANAK GETS BACK TO THE TOP

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MADE IN HOLLAND

COMMENT

Photo: Red Bull Content Pool, SMJ Photography, Jakob Ebrey .Motorsport Images

Any excuse to use a photograph of Johnny Herbert is welcome in our books...

LIVING IN THE MEMORIES

I will nail my colours to the mast here: Johnny Herbert. He was the driver who really fired my passion when I was younger, and I watched him take a glorious win in the Formula Ford Festival at Brands Hatch in 1985.

I was there in 1988 too when he had his terrible accident, and I was also at Silverstone on the day he took his maiden Formula 1 victory for Benetton in 1995. It had been a truly remarkable decade for the cheeky chappie from Essex.

So he was my vote for my favourite Formula 1 driver, and the reasons are purely personal. And that is the way any great motorsport debate starts: it is all about personal opinions, and that is why the results of the huge online poll conducted by MN – which garnered more than 80,000 votes – was so interesting. We hope you enjoy our countdown, which starts on page 18. Please let us know if you think the order is wrong, or if someone is missing from the list.

This week we also bid a sad farewell to Hannu Mikkola, one of the real gentlemen of the World Rally service park. There isn't anyone who met the Finnish legend that doesn't have fond memories of the man who tamed the Audi quattro when it took on the world. From 1978 to 1984, Mikkola didn't finish outside the top three of the points standings in what was arguably one of the fiercest eras for rally driving, certainly in terms of the cars that were taking to the stages.

While forever associated with Audi, Mikkola proved extremely versatile and it was his empathy for the machinery that helped him gel with whatever he was tasked with driving. He had the speed, but also the sympathy and that made him nearly the perfect World Rally Championship driver.

Ott Tanak bounced back to WRC victory with a masterful drive in Lapland. The Hyundai man controlled the event from the get-go and it is remarkable to think that since he claimed the World title in 2019, he had only won one further event up to last weekend. With his confidence restored, he will be a real threat for a second crown.

The incumbent in the Motorsport News Q&A hotseat this week is Ian Titchmarsh. If you've been trackside over the last four decades, you will have heard his tones calling races or thrusting a microphone at racers in the pitlane or on the podium. If there is a more knowledgeable enthusiast, we have not met them yet. He speaks to Graham Keilloh and his answers are fascinating.

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

F1 in hock

Figures show that Formula 1 posted a loss of $386 million last season as the income from grand prix racing fell by 44%. The losses were due to a lack of race promoter fees amid Covid and also race broadcast fees were affected. Liberty Media also handed out bonuses to teams that signed the reworked Concorde Agreement. Advertising revenue was increased over previous seasons, but the cash pot shared out by the 10 competing teams fell from $1012 million in 2019 to $711 million last term.

Ilott's GT deal

Ferrari has confirmed that its academy driver Callum Ilott will tackle the Endurance Cup rounds of the GT World Challenge Europe this season while also working alongside the F1 team as its test and development racer. The Briton, runner up in the FIA Formula 2 competition last year, will link up with Antonio Fuoco and Davide Rigon in the Iron Lynx Ferrri team to race a 488 GT3 machine in the five-round series, which includes the Spa 24 hour.

Chris Craft

Former British F1 driver Chris Craft, best known for his exploits in sportscars, died last week after a long illness aged 81. He was a podium finisher at Le Mans in 1976, the highlight of his 14 appearances at the race. He was renowned engineer too, working with the Japanese Dome operation and also formed the Light Car Company with Gordon Murray, which launched the Rocket road car.

Grosjean's Indy run

Formula 1 refugee Romain Grosjean took part in his first IndyCar test for Dale Coyne Racing with Rick Ware Racing, his new home for 2021, last week at Barber Motorsports Park. The 34-year-old, who will take part in the 13 road course events this year, said: "I can really understand why you can get the racing good. The way the team works is really good. It's different, but I'm happy with that. [I'm] trying to adapt myself has [it has] been quite smooth."

Chevy is back

Chevrolet has confirmed that it will enter the opening round of this season's World Endurance Championship in Portugal on April 4 with Oliver Gavin and Antonio Garcia at the wheel of a C8.R. It is thought that the firm will also enter the WEC round at Spa in Belgium at the beginning of May as it plans to return to Le Mans.

Young's TCR bid

The 2019 Renault UK Clio Cup title winner Jack Young, 19, will race for the Brutal Fish Racing Team in TCR Europe. Young, who has become a member of the JAS Motorsport Development Programme, will race a Honda Civic Type R. Northern Irishman Young said: "The support I'll receive at race weekends as part of the [JAS] programme will be invaluable to my development as a professional racing driver." The season starts in Slovakia on May 8-9.

Photos: Motorsport Images, Alfa Romeo

MAX CAUTIOUS ON PROSPECTS FOR 2021 RED BULL CHALLENGER

Limited running and demo tyres mean the title chaser is circumspect on new car

Max is unsure of RB16B

By Matt James

Max Verstappen says it is too early to tell if his new Red Bull RB16B grand prix car will be the Mercedes-beater the Dutchman hopes it will.

The wraps came off the Honda-powered machine last week ahead of a 60-mile shakedown at Silverstone.

While the running with the fresh machine was conducted on prescribed Pirelli rubber, Verstappen and new team-mate Sergio Perez also conducted further mileage in the 2019-spec RB15.

Verstappen, who finished third in the Formula 1 standings last season with two victories – including the finale in Abu Dhabi in December – said that the limitations on the rubber meant that a positive assessment of the 2021 car was impossible.

The 23-year-old reported: "I never really base a lot of my findings on this. It's more just wanting to get the car out, run a few laps, and it all felt normal to me. We just need to wait and see what's happening in [the official pre-season test in] Bahrain [March 12-14] once we have proper tyres under the car.

"I just wanted to get the car out and run, then everyone has their data, I got back into a Formula 1 car. Then we move to Bahrain where the real work to try and find the optimum set-up on the car is happening with proper tyres. Because these demo tyres, you can't really read anything."

Perez was more upbeat about the RB16B after his limited running. The Mexican said: "I can kind of already see that there is potential in it, and I can spot some of the differences. It's on test tyres and so on, so I don't want to draw any conclusions. But I can just see there is some good potential in the car."

The wraps have come off the new Red Bull RB16B

ALPHATAURI AIMS FOR CONSISTENT SPEED WITH ITS IMPROVED 2021 MACHINE

AlphaTauri has targeted a climb up the Formula 1 midfield at the launch of its new AT02 chassis (left) last week.

The team won the Italian Grand Prix last season with Pierre Gasly at the wheel. He will be joined in 2021 by Japanese rookie Yuki Tsunoda, who replaces Daniil Kvyat.

AlphaTauri, which is the rebranded Toro Rosso squad, finished seventh in the constructors' standings last term and Gasly scored points in 10 of the 17 rounds on his way to 10th in the drivers' competition.

Team boss Franz Tost said: "In 2020, we were fighting against other teams like McLaren, Renault and Racing Point. But our target for this year is to consistently be at the top of the midfield pack and improve further."

Tsunoda added that his aim was to become the first Japanese racer to win a F1 race: "It's an honour to be competing against some of the greatest drivers in the world."

Silverstone optimistic on fans at British Grand Prix

Silverstone boss Stuart Pringle has said he is cautiously optimistic on the prospect of fans returning trackside in 2021 following the recent government announcement over the lifting of lockdown measures.

Both 2020 rounds in the UK were behind closed doors, but Pringle now said that he was hopeful the gates would be open in 2021. The British Grand Prix is scheduled for July 18.

Pringle said: "The [government] requirements have been set out. There are variables that are within nobody's control.

"But equally, things have been going well, and I think that people want to get behind an opportunity that gives some light at the end of the tunnel."

FERRARI FACTORY TO RETURN TO LE MANS WITH FACTORY HYPERCAR PROGRAMME

Ferrari has announced plans to make a comeback to top-level endurance racing in 2023 with a new factory Hypercar, which will also gun for Le Mans glory.

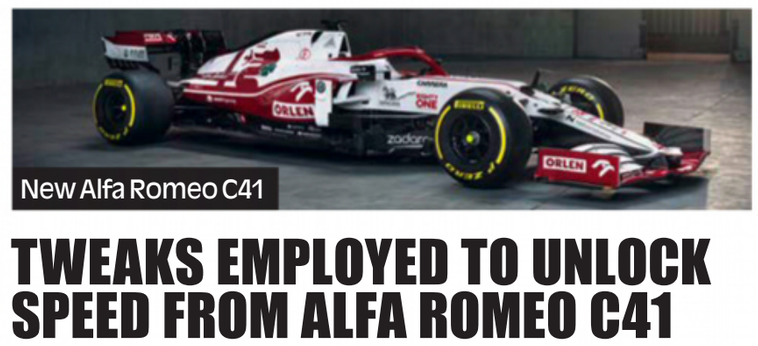
It will mark the first time the Italian giant has raced for outright glory at La Sarthe as a works team since 1973. The announcement of the programme last week revealed that boffins at the Scuderia have already begun design and simulation.

Ferrari president John Elkann said: "In over 70 years of racing, we led our closed-wheel cars to victory by exploring cutting-edge technological solutions: innovations that arise from the track and make every road car produced in Maranello extraordinary. With the new Le Mans Hypercar programme, Ferrari once again asserts its sporting commitment and determination."

The last Ferrari prototype to race at Le Mans was the IMSA-inspired 333SP, which last appeared at Le Mans in 1999.

Between 1949 and 1965, Ferrari took nine wins in the twice-around-the-clock classic in France.

Le Mans Ferrari in 1973



New Alfa Romeo C41

TWEAKS EMPLOYED TO UNLOCK SPEED FROM ALFA ROMEO C41

Alfa Romeo bosses hope an overhaul of the aerodynamics on its new C41 racer for 2021 will move it from the rear of the grand prix grid to the midfield.

Work has taken place on the nose design, aerodynamics and a floor change at the rear to help the Ferrari-powered chassis and bosses hope this will be enough to improve from the squad's eighth-place finish in the 2020 constructors' battle.

The cars will be once again be driven by 2007 World champion Kimi Raikkonen and Italian Antonio Giovinazzi.

Team principal Frederic Vasseur said: "We want to improve. All the team is motivated by the same target. We have to step by step work back to the top of the midfield.

"I hope we will close the gap. We have some high expectations on some areas of the car. "

BIRD KEEPS UP UNIQUE FORMULA E WIN RECORD

Briton Sam Bird maintained his record of scoring a victory in every season of Formula E when he claimed a truncated race in Saudi Arabia on Saturday.

Bird switched from the Envision Virgin team to join Jaguar's attack for this fresh campaign. He crashed out of the opening race in Diriyah, held under floodlights, following contact with countryman Alex Lynn but qualified in third place for the second event in the Middle East. He set off after poleman Robin Frijns at the start and took advantage when the Dutchman was forced to ease his pace after concerns about his power usage.

The race was halted early following a multi-car crash when Lynn rolled out of the event and he was taken to hospital for checks. Champion Antonio Felix da Costa rounded out the podium after inheriting the place from team-mate Jean-Eric Vergne. Vergne was penalised as he had been unable to take his second attack mode because of the shortened event.

Nyck de Vries had controlled the weekend's first race for the Mercedes team.

He led every lap of the event and finished more than four seconds clear of the Venturi of Edoardo Mortara and the Jaguar of Mitch Evans.

Bird battled with Frijns to win the second FE clash

Photo: Jakob Ebrey, Steve Jones, Matt Woods

Hotel bookings should be OK

MOTORSPORT UK SAYS HOTEL STAYS ALLOWED FOR RACE MEETINGS

The governing body is confident that Covid restriction roadmap dates won't stop overnight accommodation bookings that are needed for race meetings

By Graham Keilloh

Motorsport UK is confident the racing community in England will be able to book overnight hotel stays before the May 17 date in the government's roadmap for lifting Covid restrictions.

With club racing resuming on March 29 *(see separate story)* the later date for hotels reopening has potential implications for associated required overnight stays.

However work-related stays are already allowed, and Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers told Motorsport News that accommodation for race meetings should be allowed under this.

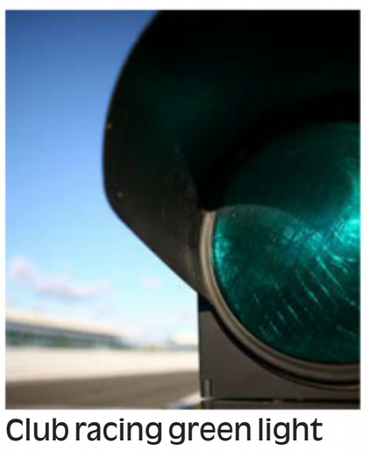
"As has been the case for some time now it is perfectly legal to stay overnight if you are working," he said, "and the definition of working, you don't need to be paid to do that. So if you are working as a volunteer and you're attending a motorsport event it's completely legitimate and hotels will happily accept bookings on that basis.

"We're also looking to clarify more broadly with DCMS exactly what the rules and regulations are moving forward, but certainly by April 12 we're looking at the ability for people to stay in secured self-contained environments."

Chambers added that some organisers are minimising the potential impact by segregating two-day meetings so few categories race across both days.

British Automobile Racing Club group CEO Ben Taylor told MN: "Everybody's desperate to know what it means for them and their championship, and they've all got their own opinions.

"The ingenuity of the motorsport community[though] means that we're not going to not go racing because someone says they won't be able to find any hotels."



Club racing green light

MOTORSPORT IN ENGLAND GETS MARCH 29 RESTART

Motorsport UK has confirmed club motorsport in England can resume from March 29 in line with the UK government's unveiled roadmap for lifting Covid-related restrictions

Last week's government announcement included organised outdoor sport's return from March 29, and UK motorsport's governing body then confirmed it will accordingly grant permits for activities from that date.

The MG Car Club, British Automobile Racing Club and Classic Sports Car Club had scheduled race meetings for earlier in March. MGCC and CSCC have confirmed their meetings are cancelled, while BARC group CEO Ben Taylor told Motorsport News: "We're working on it at the moment, we're trying to assess what it means, not just for that event but for the other events as well. And we're talking to the championships involved, but we don't have an answer yet and when we do we'll let everybody know.

"Some championships want to get the [track] time made up elsewhere and some aren't so bothered. It's difficult sometimes trying to slot extra time into the schedule when it's already done. But we'll do what we're able to and what people want us to do.

"The good news is it looks like we'll get pretty much a full season from a club racing point of view."

The British Racing and Sports Car Club already cancelled two planned March meetings *(see MN, January 28)*.

MGCC TEAMS WITH TRIUMPH FOR NEW EVENT

Following the cancellation of its showpiece MG Live, the MG Car Club is collaborating with two Triumph clubs to create a new Triumph and MG Weekend, taking place this August.

While MGCC's two-day June Silverstone Grand Prix circuit meeting will still go ahead, it will not be run as MG Live as Covid restrictions make the event's infield activities impossible.

The club therefore has combined with the TR Register and Triumph Sports Six Club from MG's traditional rival brand to create this new event that will include traders, entertainment and live action at Malvern's Three Counties Showground on August 13-15.

MGCC assistant general manager Lauran Gallacher said: "Whilst we were sad that MG Live was not possible this year, we have turned the challenges of Covid around into an opportunity to offer a new, fun and landmark event for members of the MG Car Club."

MGCC has also cancelled its planned March 20 meeting on Silverstone's national circuit in line with no racing permits being issued before March 29 *(see separate story)*.

The club told MN it is discussing the issue of replacing lost track time with its championships and guests and may explore other opportunities for this later in 2021, though for now it is concentrating on its five remaining race rounds.

MG Live gets replacement event with Triumphs

CASTLE COMBE RETURN PLANS

Castle Combe Racing Club has confirmed that its traditional season-opening Howard's Day race meeting will go ahead as scheduled on Easter Monday, April 5, following Motorsport UK's confirmed restart plans.

The meeting will contain two races each for the club's four categories: its GT, Saloon and Formula Ford championships plus its Hot Hatch series.

However the Historic Racing Drivers Club, which was due to have three races at the meeting, will not now attend due to the majority of their competitors travelling from various parts of the country and using hotel accommodation near the circuit. CCRC has confirmed that the HRDC will now bring these three races – its Allstars, Classic Alfas and Touring Greats events – to the Wiltshire circuit in August.

There will continue to be at the venue strict enforcement of current Covid-19 control measures for the Howard's Day meeting and the smaller line-up will allow more paddock space per head.

The club has also confirmed that its office reopened for normal business from Monday earlier this week.

Combe: starting on schedule

UK insurance threat averted

UK RACING INSURANCE THREAT QUASHED

It has been confirmed that the UK will be exempt from the Vnuk insurance move that posed an existential threat to motorsport by treating racing collisions as road traffic accidents.

As Motorsport News closed for press last week, the Department for Transport confirmed it is to exempt the UK – and therefore UK motorsport – from the implications of the European Union's Motor Insurance Directive that requires a wide range of vehicles to be insured, even if used on private land.

Vnuk continues to apply in the EU where the FIA is making representations for a motorsport exemption.

Motorsport UK chairman David Richards said: "[This] is a hugely significant victory for the UK and our sport, after a considerable effort by Motorsport UK and the Department of Transport over several years."

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RACING NEWS

Photo: British GT Championship, JHR Developments, George McNeill, Drew Gibson

McLaren DDP is back a year on

Milner: at last gets chance

McLAREN DRIVER DEVELOPMENT BRITISH GT PROGRAMME RESUMES WITH TEAM ROCKET RJN

Young driving quartet at last get their chance in McLaren Automotive's British GT programme

By Graham Keilloh

McLaren's Driver Development Programme will resume this year with the four drivers originally selected for 2020 now contesting 2021's British GT championship across two Team Rocket RJN 570S GT4s.

Katie Milner, Michael Benyahia, Harry Hayek and Alain Valente were selected for the programme's 2020 intake and were set to race in British GT with Tolman Motorsport in 570S GT4s that season. The programme was then suspended because it was felt not possible to carry out certain aspects, such as tailored coaching, with Covid-related social distancing and a compressed racing season.

McLaren promised at the time that the quartet would be retained for 2021 to fulfil the programme then and with lockdown restrictions now set to be lifted they will indeed compete in British GT this year in the GT4 contest. This will now be with Team Rocket RJN, with which Michael O'Brien and James Baldwin contended for last year's British GT overall GT3 title.

Team Rocket RJN co-owner Chris Buncombe said: "Announcing our involvement with the McLaren Driver Development Programme is a fantastic way to begin our second season as a McLaren Customer Racing team.

"We're confident that our highly talented young drivers will be a force to be reckoned with."

The Driver Development Programme was launched by McLaren Automotive in 2018, and in 2019 the two-pronged 570S effort bagged two GT4 race victories in British GT on the way to second place in the teams' standings.

Proctors become second Silver-Am father-son pair

PROCTOR FATHER AND SON TO RACE BRITISH GT BALFE McLAREN

Father-and-son duo Stewart and Lewis Proctor will race a Balfe Motorsport McLaren 720S GT3 in this year's British GT championship, as a Silver-Am pairing.

The pair competed separately in 720Ss in British GT last year, Stewart for Balfe and Lewis for Optimum Motorsport. Stewart has competed on a part-time basis over the past two years while Lewis's full 2020 campaign included pole position in the season-opening race at Oulton Park.

They also are set in this year's Silver-Am contest to compete against another father-and-son duo: Richard and Sam Neary in an ABBA Racing Mercedes. Silver-Am this year in the GT3 category replaces the Silver-Silver 'Silver Cup' class.

Team owner Shaun Balfe also confirmed that further GT3 and GT4 entries for the squad are in the pipeline.

"We're currently working on several options that would see Balfe back in GT4 this year – indeed, one is already confirmed – as well as another 720S joining the grid," he said.

Members' Meeting now season-closer

GOODWOOD MEMBERS' MEETING MOVED TO OCTOBER

Goodwood's Members' Meeting race event has been pushed back to take place on October 16-17, following the publication of the UK government's Covid restriction-lifting roadmap.

The Members' Meeting usually is held in March or April and this year had already been moved to a scheduled May 15-16 slot due to Covid-related uncertainty.

Now with the roadmap indicating only a limited number of spectators could attend an event on those days, the meeting is now set to be the venue's season-closer.

The Duke of Richmond said: "We're pleased that we can safely reschedule it to later in the year. We can't wait to welcome our guests back."

LEGENDS RENAMES AWARD AFTER LATE McCOSH

The Legends Cars National Championship has honoured the memory of recently departed racer Gerard McCosh by renaming its round-by-round Masters award the Gerard McCosh Napoleon Award.

Popular McCosh lost a lengthy battle with cancer. In addition to renaming the award, McCosh's favoured #69 will be retired from use. 'Napoleon' in the award's name is a reference to McCosh's famed pink pig cuddly toy mascot displayed on his competing car.

Championship owner Phil Cooper said: "It's only right and proper we do something in Gerard's memory, and specifically something which keeps his name part of the championship."

McCosh – and 'Napoleon' – get Legends award tribute

Loake: 100% man steps up

LOAKE GETS BRITISH F4 MOVE WITH JHR

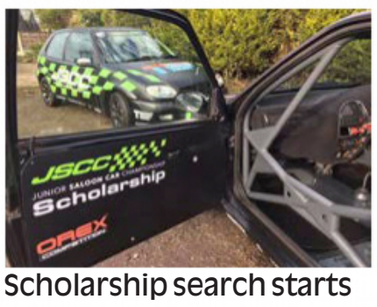
Reigning Fiesta Junior champion Joseph Loake has sealed a move to the British Formula 4 championship this season competing with the JHR Developments team.

The 15-year-old took an eight-win clean sweep en route to his 2020 title. He said: "We are hoping to bring that momentum with us into this year, but we won't know where we are until we get to round one. We'll be doing lots of testing in the run up to the start of the season, so hopefully we can be up the front straight off the bat.

"I have driven the F4 car at Snetterton back in November; we weren't far off the times people did in qualifying earlier in the year."

Abbi Pulling, who last year with JHR took four podium finishes, also returns to the team's British F4 line-up for 2021 and has eyes on the title.

Pulling said: "Last year I gained lots of experience, so coming back and challenging for the title will be good. My first day testing the car since November I felt like I did some of the best laps I have ever driven."



Scholarship search starts

LATEST JUNIOR SALOON CAR CHAMPIONSHIP SCHOLARSHIP STAR SEARCH STARTS

The Junior Saloon Car Championship has started its latest search for a teenage driving star to provide with a fully-funded 2021 season via its annual scholarship.

The shootout takes place at Croft on April 5, and includes media and fitness tests as well as those behind the wheel to win a season in the Citroen Saxo contest plus several other prizes. Applications are open now.

Entrants must be aged 14-17 and do not need an ARDS licence or race experience. It costs £595 to enter and there are 30 places.

Previous winners include champion Scott McIntyre and last year's victor Deagan Fairclough who placed sixth in 2020's table.

JSCC's David Beecroft told Motorsport News: "Last year the young lad who won it was very talented. We've done it five years now, they've all been good. We don't look necessarily for the quickest, we look for an all-round personality who shows potential and has got a willingness to learn."

Beecroft added that JSCC for 2021 has had its most registrations to date.

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RALLY NEWS

Photos: Motorsport Images, mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Hyundai Motorsport

OBITUARY

Hannu Mikkola
1942-2021

One of the original Flying Finns, Hannu Mikkola was a huge hit with fans at classic events such as the Goodwood Festival

THE PROPER RALLY GENTLEMAN WITH A ZEST FOR COMPETITION

World champion who had time for everyone left an indelible mark

By Graham Lister

Hannu Mikkola, who lost his battle with cancer last month aged 78, was a rallying colossus.

Big on ability, big on achievement and big on being a gentleman, Mikkola was from rallying's golden age when rallies broke cars, hearts and resolve all too often.

An original Flying Finn – he took his national title in 1968 – Mikkola reached the very top in 1983 when he became World champion, after missing out by a single point in 1979.

Having made rear-wheel-drive Ford Escort Mk2s dance, Mikkola tamed Audi's monster four-wheel-drive quattro, the car with which he would become synonymous.

He won on snow, gravel and Tarmac. He mastered high-speed sprints (the 1974 1000 Lakes Rally was his first WRC win when his flamboyancy shone) and long-distance rallies (the gruelling 1987 Safari was his last WRC success).

Mikkola demonstrated considerable versatility by chopping and changing cars (he also rallied for Mazda, Mercedes-Benz and Toyota to name but a few). He never lost his zest for competing, switching to historic events after calling time on his WRC career with 18 wins from 123 starts.

He won the London to Mexico Rally in 1970 then repeated the feat on the 25th anniversary edition in 1995.

His tally of 1000 Lakes wins stands at a ranking-equalling seven with Marcus Gronholm, while only Sebastien Ogier won Britain's WRC round more times than he with five triumphs.

When word got out that Jimmy McRae was gathering together all the surviving WRC champions to contest the Colin McRae Forest Stages in 2008 as a tribute to his son, Mikkola was only too happy to oblige.

And when Motorsport News visited Mikkola's Helsinki home for its series marking the 30th anniversary of the WRC back in 2009, Mikkola couldn't have been more generous both with his time and hospitality.

Mikkola was at the forefront of a new era of rally machines

He'd read up on the 1983 season – the topic of conversation that July afternoon – before MN's arrival "just to be fresh in the mind", he said. He then offered MN a lift back into town, in an Audi of course, stopping to make a call to Timo Salonen, no less, after learning of the difficulties we were having tracking him down.

"There's a guy who needs to speak to you about your World title, he will call you," was the information Mikkola relayed to Salonen as central Helsinki approached.

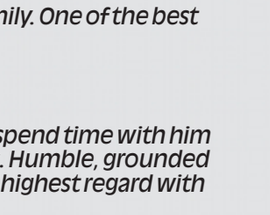
Motorsport News extends its condolences to Mikkola's family and many friends.

REACTION

Juha Mikkola, son
Via Twitter
"It has been heart-warming to see the posts remembering my dad. Most knew Hannu Mikkola as a rally driver, I will remember him as an amazing husband to my mum Arja, father to Vesa and me, and grandfather. Thank you for everything dad, you set an incredible example for us to follow in life."

Vesa Mikkola, son
Via Twitter
"Most knew him as a rallying great who ushered in the golden years of the sport. To me, he was dad – and an incredible one at that. Always supportive, loving and genuine. Also a loving grandfather to my two boys. Rest in peace dad."

Petter Solberg, World Rally champion
Via Twitter
"He was a legend, a proper gentleman, a real champion, a great father to great kids. [I am] sending all my condolences to his family and friends. RIP."



Ari Vatanen, World Rally champion
Via Facebook
"Very few, if any, can touch Hannu's greatness as a driver. He is a Legend and a real champion. A gentleman, devoted family man, respected and appreciated by everybody. He left a legacy in the rallying world. He was a true Flying Finn. He had a big impact on my life. He inspired me, he guided me, he took brothely care of me even when we were competing against each other."

Jari-Matti Latvala, WRC driver and team boss
Via Twitter
"Hannnu Mikkola was one of those original Flying Finns who was a real gentleman. He inspired so many people including myself and I am glad I would meet him and share some great memories."

Fred Gallagher, co-driver and organiser
Via Facebook
"Hannu Mikkola left us tonight, one of the greatest drivers of all time. Tony, Henri, Juha and I had some great battles with him. RIP."

Carlos Sainz, World Rally champion
Via Twitter
"A very sad day for the rally family. One of the best drivers ever has passed away."

Guy Wilks, driver
Via Facebook
"I have been lucky enough to spend time with him and what a gentleman he was. Humble, grounded and so warm. I hold you in the highest regard with great memories."

Jason Pritchard, rally driver
Via Facebook
"Saddened to hear the passing of a true rallying legend Hannu Mikkola. I'll never forget my first time at the Goodwood Festival of Speed queuing for breakfast I turned around to see Hannu stood behind me. An absolute gent who'll be missed by us all. RIP"

GRYAZIN IMPRESSES M-SPORT IN WRC TEST

M-Sport could add to its young driver pool after testing Nikolay Gryazin in one of its Ford Fiesta WRCs prior to last weekend's Arctic Rally Finland.

WRC 2 event winner Gryazin, the ERC1 Junior champion from 2018, was given the chance try-out as a reward from company boss Malcolm Wilson.

"It was a bit of a treat from Malcolm," M-Sport team head Richard Millener explained. "Malcolm was impressed with his performance in Monte Carlo so he had 80 kilometres in the car. Like Malcolm said, to do the times he did on a couple of stages, when it was so difficult, is very impressive to see."

Of the Russian's testing performance, Millener added: "The way he got up to speed was very good considering he'd never been in the car. Maybe towards the end of the year, depending on how he gets on with his Rally2 programme, the opportunity could be there to do some more."

Meanwhile, M-Sport has confirmed that its WRC 2 driver, Adrien Fourmaux, will step to a Fiesta WRC on the Croatia Rally after the British squad landed Red Bull backing for Fourmaux. The Frenchman won the Rallylegend event in San Marino last October in a Fiesta WRC.

Gryazin will get a chance

ADAMO'S CAUTIOUS PRAISE FOR BREEN

Hyundai boss Andrea Adamo has backed Craig Breen after initially appearing to voice his concern after the Irishman dropped two places in Finland last week.

Breen ran second before slipping to fourth with the second fastest time on the powerstage a highlight for the 31-year-old. "I will never criticise my driver publicly [but] I slipped a bit," Adamo said. "But [for] the level of performance, [drivers] need a deep knowledge of the car and the continuous use of the car to really be able to fight for the last 10th of a second. Craig was not driving the car since Estonia last year. He did one day of testing.

"He was feeling the responsibility to bring home points but, on the other hand, to be also fast. It's not easy."

Adamo also confirmed that Oliver Solberg is set to get another run in a Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC after the 19-year-old impressed on his World Rally Car debut in Finland. Seb Marshall co-drove Solberg to seventh, standing in after Aaron Johnston was prevented from travelling to Finland after a positive Covid test.

WRC's Breen is backed

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RALLY NEWS

McDonald: support

SNOWMAN RALLY LAUNCHES ITS RALLYTHON

The Snowman Rally organising team is poised to launch the Virtual Snowman Rallython this Saturday (March 6) on the day the 2021 event should have been held.

Held on the rally's social media pages, the Rallython aims to celebrate the Snowman's history with old memorabilia shared and exclusive video interviews posted throughout the day ranging from modern-day drivers like Donnie MacDonald to legends like Jimmy McRae and Ari Vatanen who was third on the 1976 rally. Alongside this, a virtual rally will run on DiRT Rally 2.0.

Current clerk of the course Andy Jardine described the day to MN as "like Comic Relief" as the idea is also to raise money for three local charities: Mikeysline, Headway Scotland and Highland Foodbank. Information about the charities will be interspersed with the rally content, letting views know where they can donate.

"I think it's good for the Snowman team to get together and do something and work on something that's good for the charities," Jardine said.

ENGLISH RALLY COMPETITORS CAUTIOUS OVER EVENTS RETURN

Entrants unsure of pace and programme for mixed-surface action's resumption

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Hyundai Motorsport

Greer: return will be interesting

By Luke Barry

Leading competitors have urged caution over a rallying return despite the likely imminent lifting of the UK's Covid lockdown restrictions

Rallies have struggled to restart in the same fashion circuit races have since the first national lockdown in March last year, largely because of the discipline's more nomadic nature.

Northern Ireland champion Jonny Greer told Motorsport News: "I'm at the stage now where I'm in no hurry to do anything until things are half right.

"To get out again would be fantastic but I don't know what will happen. At the end of the day you have to realise where you are in the pecking order and while we're all bursting to go rallying it's not a necessity."

Five-time Scottish and 2011 British champion David Bogie added: "It's hard to know when we'll be rallying again.

"I would just hate to see a rally and then a Covid spike thereafter which puts us way back. But as soon as we can get back rallying I'll be rallying, that's the long and short of it."

Greer however believes it will be interesting to see what happens when rallies do restart.

He said: "We've all kind of been in suspended animation. You're going to be driving down the road at no speed and think you're flying but I think everyone's going to have the same problem, so it'll be interesting to see if you had a time for the stage previously pre-lockdown and then compared the times afterwards, to see how far away you are."

KIELDER FOREST POISED TO KICK OFF BTRDA

The Kielder Forest Rally – which replaces the Pirelli International Rally – is provisionally set to kickstart the 2021 BTRDA Rally Series season on June 19.

An updated calendar has been released by series organisers that features seven of the original eight events albeit in a different order. Only the Malcolm Wilson Rally has been dropped in favour of the reserve event, the Scottish Rally.

The Plains and Rallynuts events have both been rescheduled from the spring to August and November respectively, with the rest of the rallies maintaining their original dates. The best five scores from eight rounds will count towards the championship.

A spokesperson for the Kielder Forest Rally – which could be the first multi-venue forest rally to run in over a year – told MN the news that English motorsport will resume on March 29 has given the organisers renewed optimism.

"It's been somewhat constricting as it has for everybody over the last few months but I think things are heading in the right direction," said the spokesperson. "We're pretty well down the road [with plans]. The organising team for the event, the nucleus of it is people that have been running the Pirelli for years and years so it's going over old familiar territory."

UPDATED CALENDAR

BTRDA

DATE	VENUE
June 19	Kielder Forest Rally
July 10	Nicky Grist Stages
July 24	Scottish Rally
August 14	Plains Rally
Sept 4	Woodpecker Stages
Sept 25	Trackrod Forest Rally
October 30	Cambrian Rally
Nov 13	Rallynuts Stages

The reworked BTRDA schedule will feature eight events

Merion Evans (inset) is considering his 2021 options

EVANS LOOKING FORWARD TO WORKING WITH EDWARDS

Meirion Evans feels he can learn a lot from British Rally champion Matt Edwards, who will compete with the Melvyn Evans Motorsport team in 2021.

Edwards has switched to drive one of the team's Volkswagen Polo GTI R5s after a long association with M-Sport, something Evans believes has provided a boost to the squad.

"It's always nicer for the boys, the staff, once you have a competitive driver in it brings everybody on and everybody's more determined to win," Evans told MN. "Matt's very professional, he puts a lot of work in so it's good for me to be around, from a driver's perspective. To work with Matt for a year I'll probably learn a lot off him. And he knows that I know a little bit about the car and I could help him get into the car a bit, then he could help me get more out of it."

Edwards is set to bring the VW brand back to the BRC's top class for the first time in over two decades and Evans – who usually competes in the Irish Tarmac Championship – has considered joining him with the ITRC cancelled for 2021.

"One [car] would be fine but obviously I think it would be better to have two [in the BRC]," he said. "I've looked. The BRC for me was a lot more attractive when it started with three Tarmac rounds but still, I'd be open to give it a go. It's still maybe a bit early to fully commit to anything but I'm not ruling anything out."

ROWAN SAYS HYUNDAI HAS WIN POTENTIAL

Experienced navigator John Rowan says he is convinced Hyundai's new i20 N Rally2 will run at the front of the entry list after his initial running in the South Korean machine.

Rowan was speaking after a three-day asphalt test with fellow Irishman Craig Breen that took place close to France's border with Switzerland. Hyundai has recently run the machine in the Swedish snow with Breen and Oliver Solberg.

Only the five-speed gearbox is carried over from the soon-to-be-replaced R5 to the i20 N Rally2. The new chassis features fresh suspension and dampers in an attempt to ensure a good balance on all surface types.

Rowan – who competed in an i20 R5 on last year's SM Itaralli alongside Breen – said of the new car: "Once Craig was happy with the car, we began to dial in different settings to see whether it improved the car.

"It was a trial-and-error process, but everyone left the test happy with where the car is compared to where it was when we started.

"The new i20 N has the potential to win rallies – there is absolutely no doubt about that."

The new Hyundai has proved a hit

Photos: Jakob Ebrey. Tom Banks, Trevor Coulson

Projekt E has paved the way for electric rallycross

STARD will provide the powertrains for the UK machines

ELECTRIC- AND PETROL-POWERED CARS TO SHARE BRITISH RX GRID

Green machines to line up alongside traditional powerplants in top class in 2021

By Hal Ridge

The British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy is set to become the first series in the UK to run electric and conventional internal combustion engine cars together on track this year

Electric cars ran on the World Rallycross Championship undercard as part of the inaugural Projekt E series last season, using cars fitted with electric powertrain kits developed by former World Rally Championship star Manfred Stohl's STARD concern in Austria.

Now, the same electric kit will be adopted by the 5 Nations BRX series, with Motorsport UK in the process of approving regulations for the 2021 campaign.

The two types of car have run in parallel in the Andros Trophy in France. Last year Stohl won rounds of the Austrian Rallycross Championship in a STARD-built electric Ford Fiesta ERX.

The electric concept is also being adopted by national championships in Germany, Hungary, Italy and elsewhere.

The STARD ERX powertrain has been designed to be retro-fitted to existing Supercars, while cars raced in Projekt E last year were a Ford Fiesta ERX built in house by STARD and a Citroen C3 ERX, based on Citroen Racing's Rally2 C3.

"Rallycross itself was innovative from the outset and lends itself so well to the next era of motorsport," said championship coordinator Hannah Rynston. "To be the first in the UK to combine the two types of power is very exciting and we're very much hoping to have a few STARD powertrain-equipped cars on the Lydden grid in May.

"We have been working on this behind the scenes for a long time so it's great to see it becoming reality."

Former rally driver and 2020 Projekt E champion Natalie Barratt is among those working on joining the 5 Nations BRX Supercar field with an electric car from the opening round at Lydden Hill on May 29.

Last year she raced a STARD Ford Fiesta in Projekt E.

"It's an exciting prospect and one that couldn't come soon enough for motorsport," said Barratt. "I'm trying to put a team together and I'm hoping I can pull it off."

ULSTER RALLY RETURNS THIS NOVEMBER

The Ulster Rally – which had been absent from the 2021 rallying calendar – will run on November 19-20 this year subject to Covid-19 restrictions.

Traditionally held in August, the Ulster Rally has a long and rich history in both the British and Irish Tarmac Rally Championships. Previous winners include Jimmy McRae, Craig Breen, Stig Blomqvist and Walter Rohrl.

While organisers weren't able to run the rally in its usual calendar slot, the team is "confident" that the roll-out of the vaccination programme – which is set to be largely completed by the end of summer – will allow the Ulster to be staged safely and hopefully with spectators.

"We will continue to monitor the situation and tailor our plans to suit as we work towards the November date," said event director Richard Swanston.

"If restrictions are such that the attendance of spectators would be illegal, and would pose a risk to the community we are operating in, then we'll review the viability closer to the time.

"In controlled areas such as service parks, again, restrictions at the time will dictate how we operate. It's very fluid at the moment but we have a date and we're working towards that."

BTRDA will kick off on May 8

REJIGGED SIX-ROUND ROSTER FOR BTRDA RALLYCROSS

The BTRDA Clubmans Rallycross Championship has postponed its 2021 start following last week's announcements about the easing of the current lockdown restrictions in the UK.

Having originally pencilled the opening round of the year to take place at Blyton on March 28, the Clubmans season-opener will now take place at Lydden Hill on May 8, three weeks before the same venue hosts the opening rounds of the British Rallycross Championship.

While the second round will take place at Blyton on June 27, organisers are pencilling a further round at Blyton, on October 3 to replace the cancelled season-opener, pending BTRDA committee approval.

That would keep the series at six rounds, five of which count towards the final points' tally. The Clubman 4x4 (Supercar) category will join the series at the Pembrey double-header on August 7-8 and the season finale at Knockhill on October 24.

2021 CALENDAR

BTRDA Rallycross Series

DATE	RND	VENUE
May 8	1	Lydden Hill
June 27	2	Blyton Park
August 7	3	Pembrey
August 18	4	Pembrey
October 3	5	Blyton Park
October 24	6	Knockhill

CHANNEL ISLAND EVENTS DROPPED FROM HILLCLIMB CALENDAR

The four Channel Island rounds of the British Hillclimb Championship have been dropped from the 2021 calendar due to the uncertainty over travel restrictions this summer.

The traditional closed-roads events at Bouley Bay (Jersey) and Val de Terres (Guernsey) both form popular double-headers as a sail-away element of the championship and were scheduled for July 14 and July 17 this summer. However, it was concluded that an early decision would help all competitors with planning for the 2021 season. A BHC spokesman, for the organising BARC, said: "The BHC will be returning to these demanding closed-road courses, in their idyllic seafront settings, in July 2022."

In addition, the annual trip to Craigantlet in Northern Ireland has been postponed to September 11. The BHC, which was lost in 2020, is due to be contested over 28 rounds at 12 events covering nine venues. It is due to start at Prescott on April 24-25. Spectators will not be admitted.

BHC will have 12 meetings

EPYNT POSTPONED BUT NICKY GRIST SAFE

The Tour of Epynt rally has been further postponed after the organiser's targeted new dates of July and August were not viable.

Originally scheduled for April 3, organisers of the Asphalt Championship round are looking for a new date, but if that proves impossible the event will run back on its traditional April slot in 2022.

A notification from Landmarc Support Services has stunted the rally's running with backlogs of military training being conducted, making extensive use of the Epynt ranges that the rally runs through.

The Nicky Grist Stages on July 10 – a round of the British Rally Championship and BTRDA – will still run despite using similar land.

"The MOD has approved the proposed [Nicky Grist] rally route, which runs on gravel forest roads on and around the Epynt military range," said an event statement.

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HISTORICS

DOWN THE WORKSHOP

CHEVRON B19

Ex-John Lepp
Now for sale

Glorious Chevron B19

It is a famous car
Chevron B19, chassis B19-71-9, is now for sale with a price tag of £210,000. It has an important history with continuous ownership from new in 1971 when it was built to order for British sportscar ace and works Chevron driver John Lepp.

It raced internationally
Lepp had the B19 built with a centrally located gear shift and raced it in a full programme of British and European races in 1971, notably winning at Thruxton in September. John Gray took it over for 1972 under the Modric Motorsport banner and shared it with Peter Gaydon and Lepp in a busy European season.

There was a podium in Angola
Ian Harrower did a similar mix of races through 1973 and '74, famously finishing third with Richard Jones in the Nova Lisboa six-hour street race in Angola in 1974, the year that a pedestrian bridge tragically collapsed onto the track just before the start.

Reborn as the 'Chimp'
At the end of 1974, the B19 was four years old and its international career was at an end. Instead, it was bought by Tony Wadsworth and used in speed events before being developed for Super Saloon racing by the addition of a Hillman Imp-shaped body. With Jonathan Buncombe at the wheel, the 'Chimp' was briefly very competitive before being outlawed by rule changes.

The move to historics
It was converted back to B19 trim for the 1977 season and was raced by Paul Howarth and Vin Malkie for several seasons in fledging historic events. Then, in 1983 and 1984 it was raced in Thundersports by the late Jim Wallis, with Mike Wilds and Andrew Gilbert-Scott sharing the driving. Wallis and Gilbert-Scott finished third in the Thundersports race that supported the 1984 British Grand Prix at Brands Hatch.

Now on the market
Richard Eyre and Ray Bellm both owned the Chevron for brief periods and it then went to Roger Andreason who stored it for more than 15 years and also restored it to John Lepp livery. It was bought by Kevin Wilkins for use in historics and recently it has been owned by a Belgian racer and tended by Martin O'Connell's team.

Lyons is in for a tough season in Historic F1

Photos: Paul Lawrence

Rene Arnoux: Ferrari in 1984

Alesi was a Scuderia legend

ALESI AND ARNOUX TO RACE CLASSIC FERRARIS AT MONACO

Former grand prix drivers to tackle the streets in brace of 312 B3s

By Paul Lawrence

Former F1 aces Rene Arnoux and Jean Alesi will race a pair of 1974 Ferrari 312 B3s in this year's Monaco Grand Prix Historique on April 23-25 for the Germany-based Methusalem Racing team.

Arnoux, now 72, raced for Ferrari from 1983 to '85, while Alesi, 56, did five seasons with the team in the first half of the 1990s. Other former F1 drivers due at Monaco include Alex Caffi (1976 Ensign N176) and Pastor Maldonado (1937 Maserati 4CM).

British racer Michael Lyons will contest three races in a bid to add to his three Historic F1 wins on the street circuit. On the grid for F1 cars from 1973 to 1976, Lyons will race the ex-James Hunt McLaren M26 against Arnoux and Alesi.

Lyons, 30, has raced period F1 cars at Monte Carlo since he was 17 and has won three times, twice in his Hesketh 308E and once in the McLaren.

"To win there again would be nice, but two of the races are back-to-back and the tricky bit is managing the logistics," said Lyons. "The mechanics are spread everywhere and I'm the team manager as well as the driver! We are very much a family team. I'd love to try and win all three and it's a proper challenge.

"The grids never gets weaker. I've only won one race a year so far and I first went there as a 17-year-old kid. You get in the flow of the place and it is fantastic. It is a special feeling when you get that magical lap in qualifying."

Popular Les Ely in typical pose pushing on hard on his BMW

Great competitor Les Ely passes away

The Historic racing fraternity was very sad to learn that Les Ely passed away 10 days ago, aged 71.

Les was a great competitor who loved his racing. Though he started on the ovals, he made his name in Jaguar Mk2s where he soon became an established pacesetter. He later raced an E-type and a BMW 1800 and was always very competitive.

Over the last decade or so, he often teamed up with Graeme Dodd and they had some great races and a lot of fun off the track as well. The Spa Classic Six Hours was a particular favourite and Les was a regular competitor in UK events.

Les was a down to earth, genuine character who ran a bodyshop business in his home town of Braintree in Essex. Ill health forced him to take a break from racing a couple of years ago.

More Formula Atlantic races for Anglesey

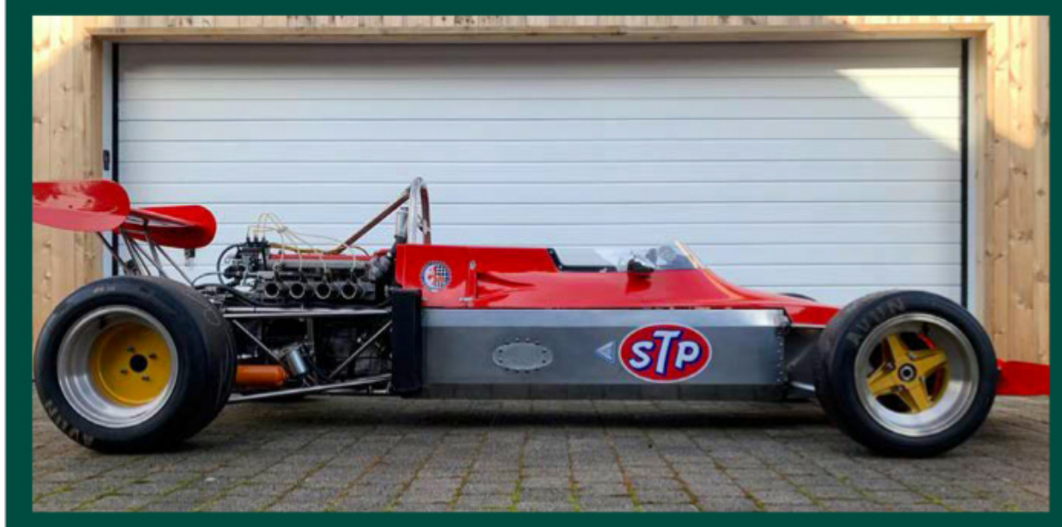
Steve Worrad is heading plans to run two dedicated Formula Atlantic races at Anglesey in August, to follow on from the Tom Pryce Trophy races held at the Welsh track in July 2019.

Worrad, who races a Formula Atlantic Chevron, is aiming to accommodate Formula Atlantic cars from 1971 right through to 1984 and has added a class for suitable period single-seaters up to 1600cc, but not Formula Fords.

"We've been offered the chance to stage two stand-alone races at the wonderful Anglesey circuit, with 15 minutes of qualifying and both 15-minute races all on Sunday August 8," said Worrad.

Worrad will tackle Anglesey events

Brabham ready to retake to the circuits in 2021



After an absence of 48 years, the ex-Alan McCully Brabham BT38C from 1972 is now restored and for sale. The Formula 3 car, chassis AM72-49, was originally run by AIRO, the Australian International Racing Organisation, and McCully raced it alongside countryman Alan Jones. It went into a private collection in Italy in 1974 after two seasons in the Italian championship.

IN BRIEF

Barter returns
Double 70s Road Sports champion Julian Barter will be back on the grid in his TVR 3000M this season after the car was rebuilt over the winter by Iain Daniels. Barter won the 2009 title in the TVR but has not raced it regularly for several seasons. It will be one of as many as seven 3000Ms on the 70s grid this season.

Series B woe
A disappointing field of only 13 cars have entered for the Series B race at the Monaco Grand Prix Historique, for pre-1961 Grand Prix cars. British drivers should set the pace as the entry is topped by Max Smith-Hilliard (Lotus 16) and former Monaco winner Julian Bronson in his Scarab. Also in the field is historic GT regular John Spiers in one of four Maserati 250Fs.

Reynard Trophy
The Formula Ford 2000 class of the Jochen Rindt Trophy race at the Thruxton Historic on June 12-13 will be for the Adrian Reynard Trophy. The former manufacturer hopes to be on the grid having recently spent a year restoring the Reynard 78SF in which he scored his first FF2000 championship race win at Silverstone. He also has a 79SF ready for the coming season.

HSCC is ready
The Historic Sports Car Club has confirmed that it is pushing ahead with the organisation of its opening race meeting of 2021, at Snetterton on April 17-18. The meeting will be subject to all relevant government and Motorsport UK rulings. To date, more than 150 entries have already been taken and more are expected now that motorsport's return has been confirmed.

New Porsche series
A new race series for Porsche 911s has been created by the Porsche Club GB for the coming season. The Porsche Club 911 Challenge will be open to a wide range of 911s from the early models of the mid-1960s through to the 964-model of the classic 911. Six races, mostly an hour long, will be run at MSVR race meetings.

Five for AMOC
The Aston Martin Owners' Club racing season will focus on five dates within BRSCC race meetings this season. The meetings will have modern content as well as AMOC period race series like the Innes Ireland Cup, Jack Fairman Cup and Intermarque, starting at Donington Park on May 8-9 and concluding at the Formula Ford Festival at the end of October.

COLUMNIST

MATT JAMES

Motorsport News editor looks back at some highlights of launch season

Photos: Motorsport Images, David Lord

Villeneuve and 'the other bloke'

McLaren launch in 1997: Spice up your life....

It was an emotional moment when the Tyrrell team took part in its final grand prix in 1998. It was at Suzuka, and I was there reporting on the event for Motoring News, now Motorsport News, of course.

The teams worked in a very different environment at Japanese Grands Prix, with most operating from packing crates that have been scattered around behind the garages. It was (although not now) a long way from the ordered sanctity of a European paddock.

The team bosses were using pokey little offices behind the paddock as a base for the weekend. I went into the Tyrrell base to catch up on the latest news and, pinned up on the wall, there was a single faxed sheet of A4 paper.

On it was a handwritten message from Ken Tyrrell, wishing his crew all the best for its grand prix farewell. The team had already been sold and the founder was watching from home as one car failed to qualify and the other crashed out on lap 28.

There was a big fanfare and a buzz about the new owners of the Tyrrell team, BAR. The brash and garish team had a plan to run its two cars – due to be driven by Jacques Villeneuve and Ricardo Zonta – in differing colour schemes. That was the format at the launch when I went to see the wraps come off the cars in a theatre in London.

It was somewhat unseemly. My personal highlight was when Flavio Briatore, then boss of engine supplier Supertec, stood up to give his spiel and promptly forgot the name of the second driver. He was sure that "Jacques Villeneuve and the other man" would impress during the season. I also remember pressing car builder Adrian Reynard's assertion that BAR would win its first race in Australia.

During that 1999 launch season, it was very nice to travel around the world to fancy locations and gratefully accept the free gifts handed out. My mother was particularly fond of the Benetton scarf I was granted, while I was more keen on the pizza on offer when I went to Maranello to see the wraps come off the Ferrari F399.

F1 launches are nowhere near the fancy affairs that they once were (remember the Spice Girls and McLaren in 1997?), even before the limitations placed on the crews by the current global heath pandemic. Now it is all about the matter-of-fact presentation, devoid of the lofty claims (maybe there is a lesson learned there by the ill-fated Reynard prophecy). They leave an impression of efficiency rather than extravagance.

But the best launch I have ever been on was nothing to do with Formula 1. It was all thanks to TVR. It was going to Le Mans in 2003 and was using a host of British talents at the wheel and the meaty T400R machine.

I got on incredibly well with the good folks at TVR and adored the Tuscan Challenge, but I was unimpressed when they invited me to Llandow in South Wales first thing on a Tuesday morning. Having completed the marathon Monday press day at MN, I headed west and arrived very late in the evening for an early start at the tiny Welsh track. I remember having dinner with drivers Michael Caine and Rob Barff, and Caine was in typical wind-up mode. I wondered why he kept asking me if I was good at swimming… I wasn't nervous, just very curious.

Things didn't seem to get much better when I pitched up at the track: there was an empty race transporter and about 20 journos hanging around, not expecting to see very much.

Then a Royal Navy Sea King chopper turned up, and the assembled scribes were issued with bright orange rubber suits. We dressed and climbed aboard the helicopter, still unaware of what was to happen. It wasn't until we disembarked on the deck of the HMS Invincible aircraft carrier in the middle of the English channel that it became clear: the T400R was raised from the bowels of this ship and onto the flight deck. Nothing has ever topped that, or the sight of a Harrier Jump Jet performing just a few feet from us.

That early morning start had been hugely worthwhile. While it is right that motorsport has stuck to its financial constraints and pared the launches back to their necessities, but I was glad I was around for some of its most bonkers excesses.

The launch of the TVR programme was epic

"Nothing has topped the sight of the Harrier Jump Jet performing for us"

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

IAN TITCHMARSH:

I'M THERE TO HELP SPECTATORS ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE

MN readers delve into the commentator's many memories from over 15,000 races, including British Grands Prix, Le Mans and much more. By Graham Keilloh

It is not at all hyperbole to say that it is hard to imagine a more appropriate readers' Q&A guest than the one we have this week. It is circuit commentator extraordinaire Ian Titchmarsh, a familiar voice to any of us who have been to UK race meetings at any point in close to the last half century.

Titchmarsh commentated on his first race in the mid-1970s, and was a journalist and a fan long prior to that. All in, he's watched in person well upwards of 15,000 races, including several British Grands Prix, many Le Mans as part of the Radio Le Mans coverage plus plenty other events besides at home and abroad. His first copy of Motoring News purchased was from May 8, 1958, and he's not missed an edition since.

Here he offers a treasure trove of memories, allied to an exceptional knowledge depth and breadth. Little wonder we got a lot of questions in, and we got plenty more messages saying what a legendary figure he is plus a good few saying he's a great guy.

From asking him your questions, we are able to attest.

Question: Which was your favourite motorsport era?
Willie Callaghan
Via email
Ian Titchmarsh: "Crikey, it's very difficult to answer that because there were so many aspects to each era. But my favourite one would be the 1970s in Formula 1 and 1980s in sportscar racing."
MN: So what was it about either that you liked?
IT: "[In F1 it's] partly because it was my generation, the drivers were the ones I knew best. The cars were different, I know most of them had the same engine, the Cosworth DFV engine, but they were all different shapes, there were large grids in Formula 1, there were some great races, just everything about it.

"Not to say Formula 1 hasn't been good in other eras as well, and it would be terribly easy to go back to when I first went to Formula 1 in the 1950s and say that was great. Well it was, but the cars were different and it was more the novelty of being able to go to grand prix racing than the cars themselves. The cars in the 1970s were pretty, and of course we still see them racing in the Masters Historic Formula 1 events today.

"Sportscar racing, Group C for me is the best sort of sportscar racing. Again I can go back to the 1950s and saw races like the TT in 1959 when Aston won the World championship. But the Group C cars and being able to do Radio Le Mans and see the cars, the Porsche 956s, 962s, the Silk Cut Jaguars, the Sauber Mercedes, and Toyotas and Nissans, it was just an amazing era, Group C."
MN: In both cases do you view it as things that are now left in the past or do you see any possibility of returning to the sort of formulae that we had then?

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images

Watson chasing down Arnoux was a thriller

John Fitzpatrick did a mammoth stint

Jaguar's Le Mans '88 triumph was special

IT: "I don't think you can recreate, technology's perhaps moved on too far to do that; you can't unlearn what's been learnt. Group C was the right category at the time until Bernie came along wanting to get the manufacturers into Formula 1 and so gradually they drifted out of sportscar racing and so I can't see the idea of having a fuel consumption-based category, and the manufacturers were allowed to run whatever engine configuration that they thought was best. So you had different types of engine, there was a V8 or a V12 for the Jaguar, V8 with Mercedes and the Porsche engine again was different, Flat-6, it was the right category at the right time in the '80s and '90s."

Question: What are your three most memorable races that you commentated on?
Chris Phillips
Via Twitter
IT: "I'll begin with the 1981 British Grand Prix which was won by John Watson and it was my favourite sort of race, a race where somebody is catching somebody.

"It still sticks out in my mind now, the old commentary tower on the outside of Woodcote corner overlooked the Woodcote chicane, and Gilles Villeneuve lost it in the chicane, took out Alan Jones, took out [Andrea] de Cesaris, for once not responsible for the accident, and almost took out John Watson, but he just managed to keep going, he almost stalled the car, well bump started I think.

"The Renaults were out front, Rene Arnoux and Alain Prost, and it looked as though Arnoux was going to win, and [we] gradually realised he was slowing and Wattie was catching up. And in 1981 there hadn't actually been a British winner of a Formula 1 race since 1977, since James Hunt won in Japan, so it was going be quite something if Wattie could win it.

"And in the McLaren he was really motoring and you gradually got the feeling he was going to be able to catch Arnoux as the Renault got slower and slower and slower. We talked later on about Mansell mania and the response that Damon [Hill] used to get as well later on, but the crowd that day was absolutely magnificent and what particularly stands out in the mind, I don't buy the *Daily Express*, but they told me off for being worse than Dorian Williams, who was the show jumping commentator, in the report of the race they were suggesting I was ridiculously chauvinistic. Well yes I was getting quite excited because it was just brilliant to watch the way John Watson drove that day, I've never forgotten it.

"Race two I suppose would be the first Silverstone Six Hour race [1976], which was a round of the World Sportscar Championship. It was Group 5, they were called silhouette cars when they were introduced that year. Only 17 cars turned up, so we thought crikey we've got six hours of racing here, 17 cars and the car on pole position was the Porsche of Jacky Ickx and Jochen Mass and that was way quicker than anything else in qualifying, and so it looked like everybody would fall asleep.

"But at the start the clutch on the Jacky Ickx car failed, so he crawled off the line and we then had the most fantastic race. We didn't have electronic timekeeping in those days so you were reliant on a lap scorer and the guy who was doing the lap chart was Jeremy Shaw, in those days he was writing for *Autosport*, and Jeremy was a dab hand with the stopwatch. And I remember him nudging me and saying the Hans Heyer Porsche with Bob Wollek it's got to make one more pitstop because it consumes more fuel than the BMW of John Fitzpatrick and Tom Walkinshaw. And sure enough we were able to pick this up and follow the progress of the two cars, the Porsche leading because it was the quicker car then having to make a pitstop and the BMW taking the lead, by which time Tom Walkinshaw had left the circuit to go and race at Thruxton, so Fitz was in the BMW for the rest of the race, the last three hours, and he drove very very well.

"Certainly Fitz was one of the best sportscar drivers we ever had. And they started the last lap just about nose to tail and Fitz just about kept in front and crossed the line after six hours of fantastic racing, a real what we used to call 'Silverstone-type finish', absolutely brilliant race.

"Number three, 1988 Le Mans, again sportscar racing, when the Silk Cut Jaguar won and I was doing Radio Le Mans. Again it was one of those races where the Porsche was the quickest car and the Jaguar had its problems which we didn't really know about because they weren't letting on that they had a major problem with the transmission. And Jan Lammers outdrove Hans Stuck who was in the Porsche on a wet track on the Sunday morning. And it was a huge crowd, that you still get at Le Mans, of British spectators, and we still reckon that the biggest crowd of British spectators apart from the British Grand Prix was at Le Mans, 50,000 plus.

"And it was the early days of Radio Le Mans, it was only the second year that we'd had it, it wasn't the elaborate affair that we subsequently became, it was just a few of us. My first Le Mans was 1970 and the only British information you obtained was every hour there was a brief update courtesy of *The Motor* by James Tilling! But now we had Radio Le Mans which was keeping all the spectators informed of what was happening so they could see the progress of the Jaguar and the Porsche on the same lap and the Jaguar won and that was an amazing day."

Question: Who was your inspiration for your current role?
Paul O'Neill
Via Instagram
IT: "I suppose it's a mixture of two people. Raymond Baxter, [he] was the voice of grand prix racing and motor racing generally in the 1950s when I began listening to racing. And he was authoritative, precise in what he said, clear in what he said. He wasn't so much a circuit commentator as a radio commentator. The two circuits near to me were Aintree and Oulton Park but otherwise you had to pick it up on the radio, and Raymond Baxter, whether it was Le Mans, whether it was sportscar racing, whether it was a British circuit or whether it was from a grand prix somewhere, you could rely on him to give you the information accurately with his wonderful voice that he had, you might remember him on *Tomorrow's World* which he went on to do. He was the one you wanted to be like.

"And the other one is the guy who was at Silverstone that I'd first of all worked with and then he retired and I took over, Peter Scott-Russell who was truly inspirational

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FEATURE

because he had this ability to come up with perfect phrases. He was the one who came up with 'the Home of British Motor Racing', the tagline for Silverstone these days. One of his was 'a future World champion if ever I saw one' he used to say when he was congratulating somebody who'd just won a Formula Ford race! He came up with so many expressions.

"And Peter had been a driver himself in the 1950s, in sportscar racing he was pretty good, so he knew what it's like to be out there. Another of his phrases 'eyes right under the *Daily Express* bridge', and he'd look to the right and that was in the days when the *Daily Express* bridge was just before Woodcote corner."

Question: What do you think are the most important skills in order to be a good commentator?
Auto Tradition
Via Twitter
IT: "Concentration; the ability to articulate your thoughts. We had Paul [O'Neill] in the commentary box for a Formula Ford race at Knockhill a good few years ago now, and Formula Ford was still pretty close and there's a lot of place changing, not Formula Ford 1600 which is a different animal altogether and wonderful but the later versions of Formula Ford in the national championship. And the commentary box at Knockhill is located in the centre of the circuit so you can see almost the whole track, and he did find it difficult. He's very different now, in fact he laughs about it because he can take the mickey out of himself.

"But you have to have a good memory, concentration and make sure that you're thinking all the time of the listener, you shouldn't be there showing off your knowledge. If your knowledge helps you inform the listener fine, but there's some commentators I'm afraid who do feel as though what they need to do is regurgitate the notes they've done [for] their homework the day before. That's not the point of commentating, the point of commentating is to help the spectators enjoy the experience, and it isn't necessarily enjoyable just to listen to somebody regurgitating facts."

"Inevitably you're always improving. I know Peter Scott-Russell used to tell me, and Anthony Marsh who was the other circuit commentator in the '50s, '60s and '70s, they would help me and point out various ways in which you could try and do better, so yes you can always get better."

Question: What was it like working with the great Robin Bradford, Alan Hyde, David Addison and Matt James and do you have any funny stories about them when you were commentating with them?
Charlotte
Via Twitter
IT: "I don't really because I tend to not dwell, the funny story happens and you move on. They're all good people to work with. Robin is an outrageous character and in his own way he took it very seriously, although at times one got the impression that he didn't. But Robin loved an audience and so for example the old commentary box at Donington Park he used to encourage every Formula Ford team manager under the sun to come up and join him so you could hardly get in to Donington Park commentary box when Robin was there presiding.

"David, I'm still working with today whenever I get the chance and is good value. Alan, since I retired from doing touring cars I don't commentate with him very much anymore. And Matt James, if Matt had the time he'd be a very good commentator, the trouble is he doesn't have the time because he's too busy producing MN! But he does take it seriously, he's got a good voice as well, Matt. Underrated as a commentator I would say.

"[David Addison] is probably the best commentator in the country these days and it's a pity we don't get a chance to commentate together more often. What both of us are always keen on is finding things out. So it doesn't matter whether it's a small meeting or whether it's something like the Walter Hayes Trophy or a bigger meeting, we always want to know why somebody has come in to the pits, what's the reason for this and talk to them if you can, get them on a microphone if you can. And too many people half the time don't seem to be bothered about that. David and I talk about this from time to time about how important it is to be keen on finding out, it's possibly partly the journalist in me, you want to know the facts."

Question: What memories do you have of Croft's double-decker bus commentary 'box' and do you recall any other odd 'boxes'?
Bob Milloy
Via email
IT: "[There are] two locations [that had] the double-decker buses I've known, let's just concentrate on the Croft one. The first bus was parked where the access to the circuit used to be, before they built the current configuration, which was the straight between the chicane and Tower. And you used to have to look out of the side window of the bus, but then when they built the current circuit and the bus was a more modern rear-engine bus, you sat on the front row and when it was a wet day half the journalists used to come in on the top deck as well so obviously it steamed up, so seeing out of it was quite difficult at times. But yes the Croft bus it may have been the last surviving bus.

"But the Aintree bus which was parked by the startline of the club circuit, which was on the other side of Melling Road, and you went on the top deck with the timekeepers and the timekeepers in those days used to have these very expensive chronographs which are susceptible to vibration. So what you couldn't do was leap about, and there was a commentator who did leap about a bit and so the timekeepers banished him, to Becher's which was the far end of the circuit. I remember that was a Southport Corporation bus and race admin was on the lower deck, and the commentary and timekeepers on the upper deck."
MN: What about any other 'odd' commentary boxes?
IT: "This is odd only in the sense of being the best commentary box ever known, which was at Macau where the [old] race control building [at] the first corner, it used to be known as Mandarin after the hotel that was on the outside of the corner. They created a commentary box which was built on the steps of the hotel right on the outside of this very fast right-hand corner.

"It's the best position I've ever been in, you had the cars coming straight towards you and as they went past they kicked up all the straw from the straw bales that are being spilt onto the track and dust and other stuff came up onto the glass pane, you really were almost in the middle of it. But when they built the jetfoil terminal and incorporated the whole media centre area, the commentary box as well, then you were moved out of this."

"Button outpaced Leslie in the BTCC Primera!"
Ian Titchmarsh

Senna showing Silverstone skill

Asking Jones about fork lifts...

Commentary stalwarts unite: Titchmarsh with Murray Walker

Question: Has any member of the motor racing community made you go starry-eyed? Does that continue today?
Chris Phillips
Via Twitter
IT: "Inevitably somebody of my time, I grew up in the era of Stirling Moss [he is my hero]. For some of the things he did, I wasn't sitting alongside him when he won the Mille Miglia, but I would have loved to do that, Jenks [Denis Jenkinson] got that job, I was too young obviously.

"Stirling Moss in so many ways, I was at the grand prix at Aintree in 1957 when he won, first British car to win a grand prix since the '20s. He was one of the all-time greats, people who perhaps haven't stopped to think about it do say 'well he was never World champion', well that wasn't the point of Stirling Moss. Stirling Moss won more than half the races he ever took part in, he was in a class of his own by the time he had his accident that stopped his professional career, he was a unique individual.

"Ayrton Senna, another one, because of his abilities and some of the races. The 1988 British Grand Prix I still find amazing. The race is remembered by many people because of Nigel Mansell's drive to second place in the Judd-powered Williams, but Ayrton was just way ahead of everybody else and the race it was possibly about 15 laps if that, had been run in pouring rain, and as he came through to lap him Alain Prost came into the pits in the other McLaren, and that was a measure for me of the gap in wet conditions between Senna and Prost.

"And then somebody who I think just drives like a hero is Hans Stuck. Hans Stuck in a Group C Porsche, a 956, 962 Porsche, was a really spectacular sight and his whole approach to motor racing, on Radio Le Mans in the early days we had to have Hans Stuck giving us dodgy jokes, but his enthusiasm is fantastic, a wonderful character."

Question: Is it true on the day Donington reopened in May 1977 that you got to have a lap of the new circuit with big Gerry Marshall in Baby Bertha?
Charlotte
Via Twitter
IT: "I did get a lap of the circuit but my recollection of it is it wasn't with Gerry, it was with Frank Sytner, who was the local BMW dealer for Nottingham. I think I went round with Frank in a BMW but as we were going round, looked behind and there was Gerry in the Firenza, not Baby Bertha but a road Firenza, completely on opposite lock coming down through the Craner Curves behind us and that was I think as close as I got to being driven around anywhere by Gerry actually.

"Frank was quite a spectacular driver but not quite as much as Gerry. But the other lap of Donington I will always remember was with Barrie Williams, 'Whizzo' Williams, in a Jaguar XJS. They'd converted these XJSs into a kind of an estate car, and it was during one lunch break at Donington, I think Robin Bradford was in the main box and he said you can go out with a radio mic and describe what it's like doing a lap of Donington with Barrie Williams.

"It had one of these push-button gearchanges and we went down through the Craner Curves, got to the Old Hairpin and suddenly we were on the grass and going round and round and round! Whizzo, as I had every confidence he would, got the thing back under control without us hitting anything but it was quite a fast, spectacular moment. I can't recall whether I was lost for words or not but anyway we carried on, no damage done except to Barrie's pride. What transpired had caused the spin was Whizzo had pushed the wrong button, he changed up going into the Old Hairpin rather than changing down, a thing that can happen if you get an unfamiliar gearbox."

Question: What was your favourite moment you commentated on at Le Mans?
Adam Stokes
Via Facebook
IT: "It was Jan Lammers taking the Jaguar across the line at the end of the 1988 race. We only found out afterwards about the problems, in fact in his autobiography [designer] Tony Southgate said Jan had kept it from them that he had got this problem with the bellhousing, and he wanted to stay in the car to nurse it to the finish but he had to nurse it at pretty high speed.

"And because Jaguars hadn't won Le Mans since 1957, they'd tried for the last two or three years to win the race and then they succeeded."
MN: What about the round-the-clock commentary, do you enjoy that?
IT: "Oh yes, going back to the previous question about what are the qualities of being a commentator, well concentration's one of them. You really had to concentrate and follow the flow of the race all the way through. One year I think we started at something like 1330hrs on the Saturday afternoon and carried all the way through until the race finished at 1600hrs on Sunday afternoon.

"I suppose it's adrenaline, pacing yourself, drinking lots of coffee. But you only feel tired afterwards. The worst time in the whole 24 hours was at daybreak when the sun comes up and shines into the commentary box, obviously that has a soporific effect. I remember one year not actually nodding off but feeling a bit tired

Raymond Baxter: an inspiration

"Stirling Moss was a unique individual"

Ian Titchmarsh

Formula Junior holds a very special place for Titchmarsh, and in 1963 he experienced a season up close

Titchmarsh saw Moss win for Britain

about 0530hrs ish in the morning and James Weaver, he was driving one of Richard Lloyd's Porsches and came down the pitlane and suddenly the car went up in a great ball of flame, it was only in the engine compartment so James was OK. But that because it was pretty close [to me] and the whoosh as the car went up in flames did make you pause and reflect and think I can't go to sleep here there's a race going on."

MN sets the scene: Titchmarsh among his many roles is a long-serving judge on the annual, formerly McLaren, now Aston Martin, Autosport BRDC Award for young drivers.

Question: Which of the MABA graduates have you been most proud of?

Caroline Bernard
Via email

IT: "The easy answer is to say in their own way they're all at the time that they win the award full of potential and you like to think they will all go on and become Formula 1 drivers. But there's two, which is no disrespect to any of the others intended.

"The first one is Jenson Button and what really excited us about Jenson was how superior he was in the wet to everybody else. That year there were Formula 3 cars for the single-seater test supported by the BTCC car, a Nissan Primera in fact, and this would be 1998 and David Leslie was the benchmark driver who normally drove the Nissan Primera in the BTCC. It was a very wet day and David went out and did a time, and Jenson was quicker, and that was five seconds quicker than all the other five finalists! It was just extraordinary and at that stage Jenson only raced Formula Ford cars, he hadn't raced anything with a front-wheel-drive configuration.

"And the other one is George Russell, who is very mature for his years. It was difficult to believe that he was then only 16 years old when he was a finalist and it will be extraordinary I think if he doesn't become World champion. And he's such a nice guy.

"Somebody who is worth a mention because of the way he has made a successful career out of involvement in the sport is Darren Turner. He's been a contracted Aston Martin driver for is it 16 years? And he's set up his Base Performance place. Darren is an epitome of someone who has taken advantage of the opportunity he's been presented with. [And he] became test driver with McLaren, it wasn't part of the prize it was just something they thought was worth offering to him."

Question: It is true you have a shrine to Formula Junior in your house?

Matt James
Via email

IT: "I passionately believe that Formula Junior is one of the most important if not the most important single-seater category ever devised. And in, you would call it these days, my gap year between leaving school and going to university, I had the chance to do a season in Europe with a Formula Junior driver, who was travelling, living off the starting money or prize money as we went from circuit to circuit.

"And the whole ambience of Formula Junior, what it represented. Matt's going to be listening to this and he's going to start 'oh yeah, here he goes again', in 1961 through to '63 there was only Formula 1 and Formula Junior, there was [no] Formula 2, there wasn't Formula 3, there was none of these one-make engine categories, so drivers graduated from Formula Junior into Formula 1. But also club racers could go Formula Junior racing.

"One of the classic stories of the season that I went in Europe, 1963, Roy James a notorious great train robber, he bought a Formula Junior Brabham, and started racing cars – he'd raced karts, he hadn't raced cars – for the first time at the start of the 1963 season and straight away he was becoming competitive at club level. By the middle of the season he was entering international races and doing very well in those. And you could point to other drivers as well.

"And if you look at any category today whether it's Formula Ford, how that evolved out of Formula Junior, Formula 3 as it was, [that] is what Formula Junior is all about. Formula Junior cars all looked great as well because they pre-date wings and slick tyres and sponsorship all over the cars.

"The guy I was going round Europe with he could be competitive, he finished 12th in the final at Monaco and sixth in the heat, it was the year that Richard Attwood won in the works-backed Lola. He ran a florist shop in the Strand, a took time out from running his business, put a manager in and spent the summer touring around Europe and you came up against the top teams, Team Lotus with Peter Arundell and so on, Mike Spence and Brabham, Denny Hulme, Frank Gardner.

"It was just a wonderful formula, and that's one of the reasons why Historic Formula Junior is so strong to this day because there's so many cars around of different shapes and sizes but all with the same sort of engine and relatively simple to run. Even if you inflate this figure [my friend in 1963] bought a year-old Brabham BT2, [it was] £1250 with engine. Inflate that and you won't get anywhere near what it costs to do Formula 3 today. And a new Formula Junior car cost I think with engine about £2000." ■

Titchmarsh: Russell is a future World champion if ever he saw one

Titchmarsh alongside MN's very own "underrated" commentator...

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FEATURE

WHO IS BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE FORMULA 1 DRIVER?

In our exclusive poll, MN uncovered the racers who have made the biggest impact. Matt James has the results

The word favourite immediately implies a huge degree of subjectivity. And, in motorsport conjecture, subjectivity is never far from the surface.

It is foolish, although not impossible, to compare statistics from different eras of Formula 1. Of course, each era is different and the technologies – not to mention the number of races, the safety and the reliability – mean that shining a light on drivers from a different decade can produce whichever result the observer wants them to.

But choosing a favourite is something that can't be argued, and it can come from so many places. It can be a driver admired while motorsport was claiming a place in heart of fans, it could be someone who performed against the odds or it could be, even, a racer whose approach was appreciated more than any other.

More than 80,000 votes were cast online when MN tried to unearth who is Britain's favourite F1 racer since the World championship began at Silverstone in May, 1950. We drew up a shortlist of 50 and put the selection out online to garner opinion. Here, we print the top 25.

Do you agree or disagree? Is your favourite not there? Please let us know: email matt.james@kelsey.co.uk.

THE MN READERS' COUNTDOWN

25 MARK BLUNDELL

F1 CAREER: 1991-1995 RACES: 61 BEST RESULT: 3 x 3RD

After a decorated and rapid rise through the junior ranks, Barnet-born Blundell went from being a test driver for Williams to join the Brabham team in 1991.

The team with Yamaha power wasn't the force it once was, but the Brit scored a point. He returned in 1993 for his most successful season in a Ligier-Renault with two podiums before a year at Tyrrell and replacing Nigel Mansell at McLaren in 1995.

24 ROGER WILLIAMSON

F1 CAREER: 1973 RACES: 2 BEST RESULT: DNF

On small things does motorsport history rest. Had Roger Williamson's manager Tom Wheatcroft, who went on to revitalise Donington Park, not insisted that his young charge commit to a car with a Cosworth engine, he could have ended up in a BRM, blocking Niki Lauda's route into grand prix racing. Instead, he joined the March team in 1973, but his career was cruelly cut short after a fatal crash in the Netherlands.

23 JOHN WATSON

F1 CAREER: 1973-1985 RACES: 152 BEST RESULT: 5 WINS

After working his way up from Formula 2, Watson took a long time to make his Formula 1 breakthrough with a succession of uncompetitive cars.

It wasn't until he joined Penske in 1976 that the machinery matched his pace. After a stint at Brabham, it was his five full seasons at McLaren from 1979 where he managed to make a lasting impact. He was third in the World championship in 1982.

22 MARTIN DONNELLY

F1 CAREER: 1989-1990 RACES: 13 BEST RESULT: 7TH

It's fair to say that Martin Donnelly, with the help of manager Eddie Jordan, wheeler-dealered his way into Formula 1. He deputised for Derek Warwick in the French GP in 1989 for Arrows before sealing a ride with Lotus. The Lamborghini-powered car was not the best-handling machine, and a breakage during qualifying in Spain left him fighting for his life.

21 TOM PRYCE

F1 CAREER: 1974-1977 RACES: 42 BEST RESULT: 2 x 3RD

After flirting with Formula 1 in non-championship races and making the step with Token, Pryce's talent began to flourish when he joined the Shadow team in 1974.

Despite talks to take him to the Lotus squad in 1975, he remained with the American team and scored two podiums before his death in the South African GP in 1977.

20 PIERS COURAGE

F1 CAREER: 1967-1970 RACES: 27 BEST RESULT: 2 x 2ND

The bright light of Piers Courage's talent shone perhaps a little too brightly at the start of his career.

His enthusiastic performances for BRM in 1967 meant he was dropped after two races, but his alliance with the up-and-coming team owner Frank Williams was where he flourished, with glimpses of pace in 1969. He was killed during the Dutch Grand Prix in 1970.

19 MIKE HAWTHORN

F1 CAREER: 1952-1958 RACES: 45 BEST RESULT: 3 x 1ST, WORLD CHAMPION 1958

Mike Hawthorn lived fast and died young. Diagnosed with kidney problems, the dashing blond-haired charger beguiled his bosses at Ferrari and, along with friend Peter Collins, the pair put Enzo's cars on top again.

Hawthorn famously beat Stirling Moss to the crown in Casablanca, but he was killed just weeks later in a road crash on the Hog's Back in Surrey.

18 ANTHONY DAVIDSON

F1 CAREER: 2002-2008 RACES: 24 BEST RESULT: 3 x 11TH

After impressing on his way up through the racing ranks, Davidson decided to turn his attention to test driving when F1 race seats never came his way after two outings with Minardi in 2002. His relationship with BAR-Honda tproved fruitful, and the Japanese firm helped him into a Super Aguri driver for 2007. However, the team folded early on in the 2008 season.

Photos: Motorsport Images

17 MARTIN BRUNDLE

F1 CAREER: 1984-1996 RACES: 158 BEST RESULT: 2 x 2ND

Immovable objects seemed to block Martin Brundle's inevitable path wherever he turned.

Had Ayrton Senna not been on everyone's lips by winning the British F3 title in 1983 after a fierce battle with Brundle, the Briton would have been feted as the next big thing. Then, after scrapping around for points, his biggest F1 break came when he joined Benetton in 1992 – as team-mate to M Schumacher Esq. That's as tough as it gets.

16 EDDIE IRVINE

F1 CAREER: 1993-2002 RACES: 146 BEST RESULT: 4 WINS

Eddie Irvine was quite happily earning a wage racing in Japan when Eddie Jordan asked him to join his merry-go-round of drivers in the latter part of 1993.

Irvine made waves immediately by unlapping himself from race leader Ayrton Senna. After two more seasons with Jordan, he was picked up to partner Michael Schumacher at Ferrari and came within a whisker of the title in 1999.

15 DEREK WARWICK

F1 CAREER: 1981-1993 RACES: 147 BEST RESULT: 2 x 2ND

There is a standing joke at MN Towers that we can't write the words 'Derek Warwick' without prefacing it with 'abnormally brave'.

He had to be courageous, for his early F1 career with Toleman was hard work. Joining the factory Renault team in 1984 turned out to be the wrong move at the wrong time, and he was left to battle for scraps in his swansong with Arrows and Lotus.

14 JOHNNY HERBERT

F1 CAREER: 1989-2000 RACES: 161 BEST RESULT: 3 WINS

Had it not been for his serious crash in Formula 3000 in 1988, where might Johnny Herbert's career have taken him? He was in talks with Ferrari and Williams when his career suffered its trauma, but still made it to the top-flight with Benetton in 1989.

It dropped him, reemployed him and allowed him to take two wins. The rest of his career was in midfield teams, although he scored another unlikely win at the European GP in Germany in 1999.

13 GEORGE RUSSELL

F1 CAREER: 2019-TO DATE RACES: 38 BEST RESULT: 9TH

It would have been hard to know where George Russell might have ended up in this list were it not for his stand-in performance for Lewis Hamilton at Mercedes last season at the Sakhir GP. The 2018 F2 champ should, by rights, have won that race and showed the world that it is only the machinery that has masked his pace so far in grand prix racing.

12 DAVID COULTHARD

F1 CAREER: 1994-2008 RACES: 246 BEST RESULT: 13 WINS

David Coulthard was another whose arrival in Formula 1 seemed inevitable given his performances on the nursery slopes and his test role with Williams in 1993, but it was when Ayrton Senna was killed in 1994 that he was thrust into the race-seat limelight.

After two seasons he switched to McLaren where the majority of his success came. He was alongside Mika Hakkinen, who proved a tough nut to crack.

11 JOHN SURTEES

F1 CAREER: 1960-1972 RACES: 111 BEST RESULT: 6 WINS, WORLD CHAMPION 1964

Il Grande John, as he was dubbed by Ferrari's ardent *tifosi*, was a man of huge abilities, be that on two wheels winning the motorcycle World championship, or navigating the politics at Maranello on his way to the 1964 World title.

He was adept extracting speed from a race car or engineering his eponymous team from 1970 onwards. There has rarely been a competitor with the drive of John Surtees.

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FEATURE

10 JACKIE STEWART

F1 CAREER: 1965-1973 RACES: 99 BEST RESULT: 27 WINS; 1969, 1971, 1973 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

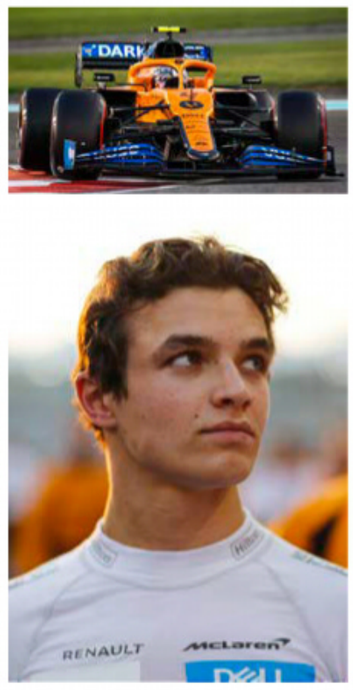
Sharp-shooter Jackie Stewart was a pioneer in so many ways in motorsport.

Not only was he at the forefront of the campaign to improve safety in motor racing, but he took the actual art of driving a competition car to a new level. He twice turned down the chance to jump into grand prix racing before making the leap with BRM for 1965 alongside Graham Hill. Finishing third in the World championship in his maiden season was a sign of things to come but it was when he was reunited with Ken Tyrrell, who'd run the Scot in F3, that the World championships started to come. He retired with 99 race starts and 27 wins at the end of 1973.

His later career led him to become a team owner in 1997, and became one of the rare men who has won F1 races and also won them with a car bearing his name.

9 LANDO NORRIS

F1 CAREER: 2019-TO DATE RACES: 38 BEST RESULT: 3RD PLACE



There was something inevitable about Lando Norris's rise to the top from the very moment he arrived in the Ginetta Junior in 2014.

Titles followed in Formula 4, Formula Renault, the Toyota Racing Series and Formula 3. The bandwagon gathered some serious momentum and he was picked up by McLaren as its tester in 2018.

Norris ascendancy happened to align perfectly with the rebirth of McLaren with its Renault engines under Zak Brown's leadership, and the young racer scored points in half of the races in 2019. His maiden podium came in Austria last year. Alongside his head-turning showings on-track, Norris is at the forefront of a new generation of driver who is in touch with his fanbase via social media platforms and gaming. He is a racer for the new wave.

8 GRAHAM HILL

F1 CAREER: 1958-1975 RACES: 176 BEST RESULT: 14 WINS; 1962, 1968 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Formula 1 was only one of Graham Hill's racing theatres, although it served him well with two World titles for BRM and Lotus.

He is still the only person to have claimed the Triple Crown, with victories at Le Mans and in the 1966 Indy 500 sitting alongside his grand prix achievements, which also included five wins through the streets of Monte Carlo.

But he was so much more than just a driver to the general public, who took his dry wit to their hearts. He was a regular on TV game shows and on the small screen, and he helped broaden the popularity of motorsport as much as he did his own notoriety. He was killed in a plane crash in 1975 just as his own F1 chassis, the Hill GH1 and GH2, were taking to the track.

7 STIRLING MOSS

F1 CAREER: 1951-1961 RACES: 66 BEST RESULT: 16 WINS

Stirling Moss was another who shifted the goalposts for racing drivers.

He was highly professional in an era when not all competitors were, and he knew the value of his skills. He was a gun for hire and made the most of the opportunities that came his way. His career in grand prix motorsport really kicked off when, after being spurned by Ferrari earlier in his progress, he joined Mercedes-Benz in 1955. Teamed with Juan Manuel Fangio, he won the British GP in that first season and went on to finish as runner up in the championship for the next four years. Moss was third in the following three years, earning him the moniker of the greatest driver never to win the World title.

6 JIM CLARK

F1 CAREER: 1960-1968 RACES: 72 BEST RESULT: 25 WINS; 1963, 1965 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

There was never perhaps a more unlikely racing driver than Jim Clark.

The shy sheep farmer from the Borders was a prevaricator. He found it hard to make positive decisions. He didn't want the trappings and the spoils that his decorated career offered him. He didn't want to write the headlines. All he wanted to do was drive cars and drive them quickly.

His relationship with Colin Chapman at Lotus was universally admired and one that brought both of them the biggest trophies, including two World championships. Clark's death at Hockenheim in April 1968 sent shock waves through motor racing. The master had been taken.

5 JAMES HUNT

F1 CAREER: 1973-1979 RACES: 92 BEST RESULT: 10 WINS; 1976 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

The Hooray Henry approach of the Hesketh Racing team when it entered Formula 1 in 1973 with a March was perfectly suited to the image that was projected by James Hunt.

Plucked from the F3 ranks, Hunt's attitude to life and to his racing was cosmopolitan. But the Hesketh dream, fuelled by champagne and lobster, was enough to thrust Hunt into the spotlight. When Hesketh ran out of cash, Hunt took a lifeline and replaced Emerson Fittipaldi at McLaren.

In a tumultuous season, Hunt fought a battle with Niki Lauda's Ferrari and managed to win. It was an unlikely triumph, but one that put Hunt at the centre of the public consciousness.

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FEATURE

4 DAMON HILL

F1 CAREER: 1992-1999 RACES: 115 BEST RESULT: 22 WINS; 1996 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

There was no certainty at all about Damon Hill's rise to the top of F1.

Double World champion father Graham's plane crash had left the family penniless, and Hill Jr had to work as a motorcycle courier to earn enough cash to allow him to indulge in his passion for racing motorbikes. But the car racing bug bit, and he worked his socks off to earn the chances he grabbed. Even up to Formula 3000 level, it was all very hand-to-mouth. But his skills as a test and development driver was recognised by Williams in 1991. Two years later, it promoted him to the race team alongside Alain Prost. After waging war with Benetton and Michael Schumacher, Hill finally prevailed in 1996. It was a real rags-to-riches fairy tale.

3 JENSON BUTTON

F1 CAREER: 2000-2017 RACES: 306 BEST RESULT: 15 WINS; 2009 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

There has never been a motor racing story like it. Just when it seemed Jenson Button would get his chance to realise the talents he so clearly had, Honda pulled the plug on F1 at the end of 2008.

The shock announcement left everyone high and dry. Until, that is, Ross Brawn put together a last-minute rescue package and his eponymous team was go. A trick double diffuser might have helped, but the Brawn BGP001 – the only chassis built by the squad before it was taken over by Mercedes – was sublime.

Six wins from the first seven races were the foundation for Button's championship-winning year. That earned Button a seven-year relationship with McLaren and when he was paired with Lewis Hamilton at the Woking outfit, he proved more than a match for his rival. While Hamilton might have had the outright pace, Button's guile and experience meant that he was his perfect foil. Perhaps his most famous F1 win was in Canada in 2011, where Button controlled the chaotic race to pounce for glory on the final lap. It was a typical Button win, built on experience and his unflappable nature.

Button's personality was also a hit. Chastised early in his career for being too much of a playboy, his application was doubled and his easy-going outlook to life plus his steely determination on it was embraced by the public.

2 NIGEL MANSELL

F1 CAREER: 1980-1995 RACES: 187 BEST RESULT: 31 WINS, 1992 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Nigel Mansell probably did more to galvanise interest in Formula 1 in Britain than just about any other driver.

The BBC had shown grand prix racing on its channel since 1978. James Hunt's powers were waning, and the up-and-coming UK talent had yet to hit the big time. The BBC – and Formula 1 in general – needed a home-grown hero. When it got one, it got a real people's champion.

Lotus wasn't the superpower it once had been when Mansell joined in 1980 but he plugged away, learning his trade and grabbing the odd podium when he could.

However, when the Norfolk team forged an alliance with Renault to use its turbo motor in 1983, things improved. Although the black and gold cars weren't the most reliable, they allowed the dogged Briton to show flashes of his ability.

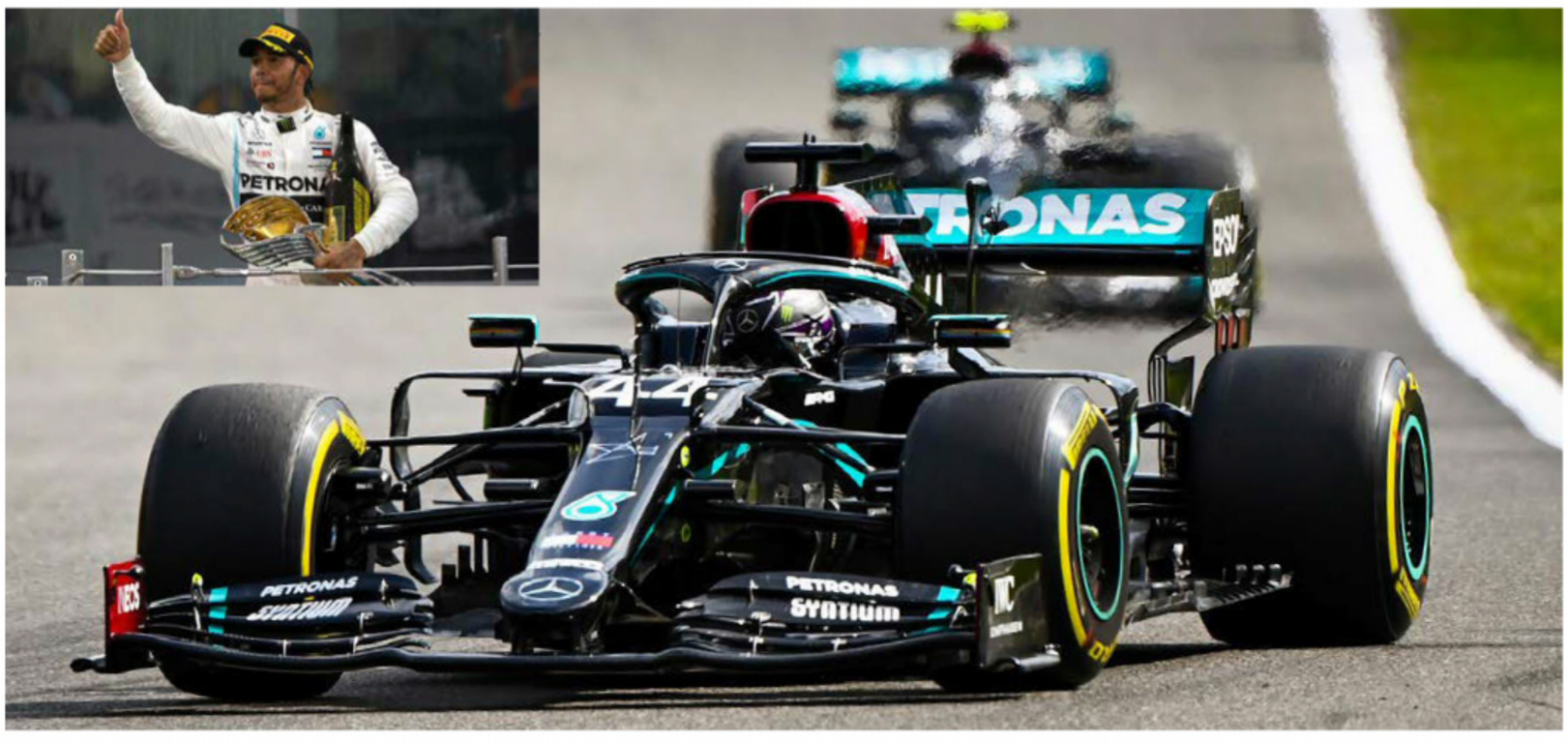
Williams noticed, and Mansell

signed for 1985. A win at Brands Hatch in the European Grand Prix opened the floodgates. The red-top newspapers took Mansell to their hearts as the racing driver who resonated with the man on the street.

There were two title near misses in 1986 and 1987. But it wasn't until Mansell returned to Williams after a stint at Ferrari that he hit the heights. The World title finally came his way in the dominant FW14B in 1992.

1 LEWIS HAMILTON

F1 CAREER: 2007-TO DATE RACES: 266 BEST RESULT: 95 WINS; 2008, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS



There is only one major record left for Lewis Hamilton to break, and given a decent Mercedes this season, there is no reason to believe that he can't now go on to eclipse Michael Schumacher's seven World titles.

As Hamilton drew level with the German this year, he smashed through Schumacher's record of the most grands prix wins. The Briton finished the season on 95, which is four ahead of the previous benchmark. Lewis has had more pole positions than anyone else too. The only area where he is lacking is in fastest laps, but who is to say that he can't get the 25 more that he needs to snatch that honour too?

In terms of Hamilton's standing in the public psyche, he is in a strange position. Those within motorsport recognise both his ability, unrelenting pace and his mastery of the art. Those are elements that show no sign diminishing, either. Some of his performances in the disjointed 2020 campaign were pure works of art and show that is no fatigue in his desire to perform at the highest level. If anything, he is still getting better. Those who understand motorsport realise the depth of Hamilton's achievements and give him the adulation he deserves.

But the view from outside is very different. Hamilton has struggled to cement a place in the hearts of the general public. Sure, he won the BBC's Sports Personality of the Year accolade last year, which is a reasonable indicator of the wider view of him, but there are still snipes and swipes in the national media which go to show that Lewis is not held in the esteem that he should be.

He stands on the cusp of an unrivalled achievement not only in motorsport, but in global competition. Maybe that will finally turn the tide in his favour.

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WRC REPORT: ARCTIC RALLY

Road position helped, but Tanak was masterful

TANAK KEEPS THE PAYMASTERS HAPPY WITH DOMINANT WIN ON DEMANDING ARCTIC RALLY

Hyundai boss Adamo wasn't happy after the Monte: he has been placated now. By Graham Lister

It's still not completely clear whether Hyundai chief Andrea Adamo's post-Monte rant was intended to instil fear into his staff or simply motivate them to do a much better job on round two.

On the basis his "people" were celebrating in Lapland rather than "licking our wounds", as the Italian had so eloquently put it after the season opener, clearly Adamo had got the reaction he'd demanded, thanks to a 1-3 finish in what is essentially the rival Toyota team's backyard.

While the squad was formed a good six hours to the south in Puuppola, its Yaris WRCs were not only honed for winter running within range of the Arctic Circle, they'd scored back-to-back wins on the Arctic Lapland Rally, the national event on which the all-new WRC version was based.

Adamo wanted to see "something to make me proud and happy" on the Rovaniemi counter. Thanks to Ott Tanak, who left Toyota for Hyundai for the 2020 season as the reigning World champion, he got that in spades – or rather shovels as Laplanders, who have a penchant for using them, prefer to call them.

Co-driven by fellow Estonian Martin Jarveoja, Tanak was magnificent all weekend, just like he had been when the WRC last visited Finland in the summer of 2019, notching up his 14th victory in rallying's top tier and hitting back from his Monte non-score in style.

Bucking the trend by carrying one spare Pirelli for Friday's opening leg – or rather two runs through the 19.29 miles of Sarriojarvi – when all of his rivals had carried double, Tanak beat Craig Breen by 3.6s on the first pass before going 9.8s quicker than Kalle Rovanpera on the after-dark rerun.

As well as taking advantage of the weight saving carrying one spare brought (some 23 kilograms), Tanak also capitalised on his seventh-place road position on a surface slightly less compact as it would become on Saturday and Sunday – the ambient temperature crept above freezing to one degree centigrade on Friday, before falling back down to a more respectable minus four thereafter.

However, Tanak did concede that preserving his tyres became a chief concern when sections of gravel emerged on SS2.

"At the moment we are leading but the road position was different to the Toyota guys," Tanak said after Friday's running. "On the second loop [the road position benefited us]."

Starting Saturday's second leg on top by 16.2s, Tanak extended that margin by winning SS3 before he added SS5 and SS6 to his tally after Elfyn Evans had topped the order on SS4.

Kalle Rovanpera, who lost precious seconds in a snowbank on SS1, was fastest on SS7 as Tanak switched to tyre preservation mode, the Estonian wary of how patches of gravel and ruts on the repeated stages were compromising the level of stud retention on his Pirelli covers.

"We took all the tyres we had and we used them," Tanak said on Saturday evening. "This morning we were pushing but the afternoon was very important to come through clean."

Starting Sunday's leg – two passes of the 13.96 kilometres of Aittajarvi – leading by 24.1s, Tanak could afford to ease off, although his failure to capture more than two points on the event-closing powerstage could yet count against him in his bid for a second World title.

"We knew it was going to be very, very complicated to take the fight [to Toyota]," said Tanak, shortly before Rovaniemi's favourite resident Santa Claus, no less, had handed over his winner's trophy. "But in the end we did a very good weekend, just enough, and only one mistake [a brush with a snowbank on Saturday]."

While Tanak's victory was largely assured heading into the final day, the battle for second between Rovanpera and Thierry Neuville, in the second factory Hyundai raged on.

After winning SS7 on Saturday, 20-year-old Rovanpera reckoned he'd been a bit too rough on his tyres and would be in trouble on SS8, Saturday's night-time finale.

While Neuville sprinted to the stage win by an impressive 12.3s over Tanak, Rovanpera was a further 0.8s behind. A gap of 14.9s had been whittled down to 1.8s with just Sunday's brace remaining.

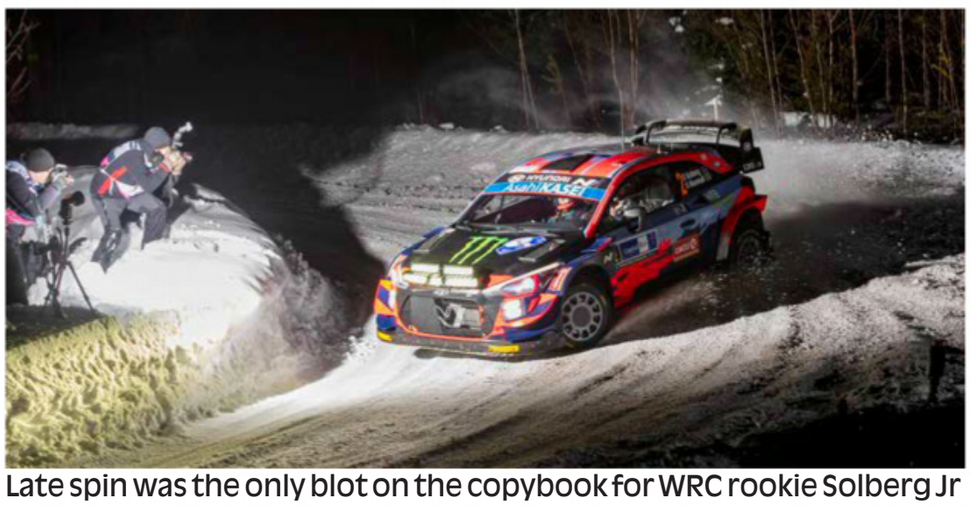
"I tried to save my tyres throughout the

RESULTS

World Rally Championship round 2/12
Event: Arctic Rally Where: Rovaniemi, Lapland When: February 26-28

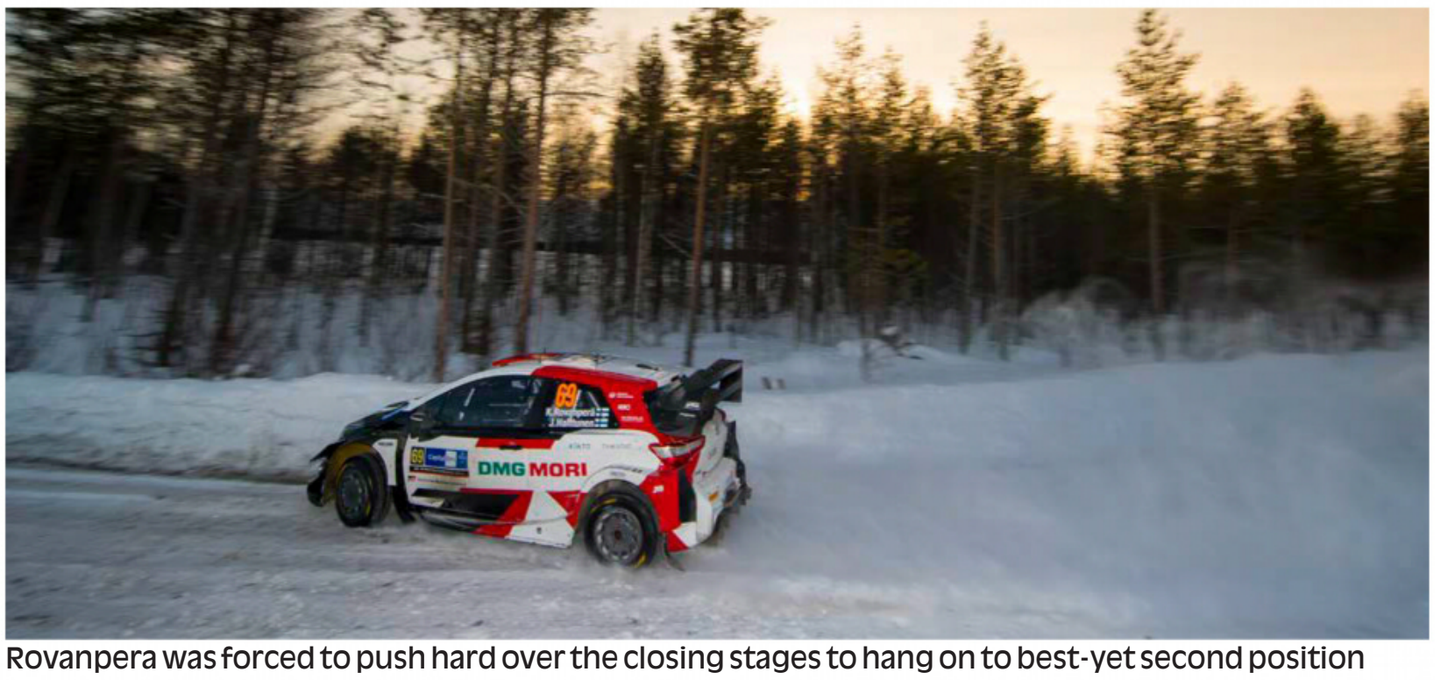
POS	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR	TIME
1	Ott Tanak/Martin Jarveoja	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	2h03m49.6s
2	Kalle Rovanpera/Jonne Halttunen	Toyota Yaris WRC	+17.5s
3	Thierry Neuville/Martijn Wydaeghe	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+19.8s
4	Craig Breen/Paul Nagle	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	+52.6s
5	Elfyn Evans/Scott Martin	Toyota Yaris WRC	+1m01.5s
6	Takamoto Katsuta/Daniel Barritt	Toyota Yaris WRC	+1m37.8s
7	Oliver Solberg/Sebastian Marshall	Hyundai I20 Coupe WRC	+1m39.0s
8	Teemu Suninen/Mikko Markkula	Ford Fiesta WRC	+2m09.0s
9	Gus Greensmith/Elliott Edmondson	Ford Fiesta WRC	+3m39.4s
10	Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferme	Volkswagen Golf GTI R5	+6m07.0s

WRC 2: 1 Lappi/Ferme; 2 Andreas Mikkelsen/Ola Floene (Skoda Fabia R5); 3 Nikolay Gryazin/Konstantin Aleksandrov (Volkswagen Golf GTI). **WRC 3:** 1 Teemu Asunmaa/Marko Salminen (Skoda Fabia); 2 Egon Kaur/Silver Simm (Volkswagen Polo GTI); 3 Mikko Heikkila/Topi Luthinen (Skoda Fabia). **Championship standings:** 1 Rovanpera 39; 2 Neuville 35; 3 Ogier 31; 4 Evans 31; 5 Tanak 27; 6 Breen 16. **Manufacturers:** 1 Toyota Gazoo Racing 88; 2 Hyundai Shell Mobis 77; 3 M-Sport Ford 24; 4 Hyundai 2C Competition 22.


Late spin was the only blot on the copybook for WRC rookie Solberg Jr

Jarveoja helped Tanak (right) celebrate his 14th WRC triumph

Photos: Hyundai Motorsport ,Toyota Gazoo Racing, mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Rovanpera was forced to push hard over the closing stages to hang on to best-yet second position

Communications woe for Neuville and new co-driver Wydaeghe as the pair struggled to hear each other

BRITON EVANS STYMIED BY A LACK OF CONSISTENT SPEED

While his Toyota team-mate Kalle Rovanpera had been tipped for a breakthrough victory in Lapland, Elfyn Evans flew in from his native Wales adamant that claiming back-to-back winter WRC wins was by no means a foregone conclusion.

From the euphoria of his Rally Sweden triumph 12 months ago, Evans and co-driver Scott Martin took fifth, 8.9s behind Craig Breen.

"It has not been the best event for us, I'm quite disappointed with the overall result," Evans said. "There were some flashes of good speed but nowhere near consistent enough to challenge for the top positions. There's things to learn from this weekend, that's for sure and we know where the areas are we need to improve."

While Evans wouldn't be drawn on specifics, his Toyota team-mate Sebastien Ogier endured a rally to forget.

Hamstrung by running first on the road on Friday, Ogier had battled from ninth to sixth on leg two only to get it all wrong in the most un-Ogier-like move within sight of the SS8 finish.

"The tyres were gone," said Ogier. "I was a little bit too much sideways, hit the bank and catch the front. It's a weekend to forget.

Manchester's Gus Greensmith completed his first winter rally in a WRC car in ninth, as Dan Barritt co-drove Takamoto Katsuta to sixth at the expense of Oliver Solberg and another co-driving Briton, Seb Marshall.

Solberg, 19, was making his debut in a World Rally Car but spun into a snowbank nearing the finish of SS10.

Evans says that he has learned lessons from Arctic outing

BREEN RUES HIS LACK OF EXPERIENCE DESPITE POINTS

Fourth overall and a powerstage time that was faster than team-mate Thierry Neuville – who finished one position in front – marked a strong return to world level for Craig Breen and co-driver Paul Nagle.

Absent from the WRC since his fine Rally Estonia second place last September and with only one day of testing to reacclimatise to a World Rally Car, Breen had every reason to be satisfied.

But self-criticism is a big part of what Breen does and he was seldom satisfied with his performance in the works Hyundai as a drop of two positions on Saturday sat far from comfortably with a driver who gets up to win.

"It was really tough mentally," said the Irishman. "After delivering so much in Estonia the goal posts moved and you just want to win. But I need to remember my experience is on the low side. We need to bide our time."

Breen had an eventful start to Sunday's deciding leg when his Hyundai mechanics completed a gearbox change during the morning's 15-minute service.

Although Breen wasn't satisfied with his first run through Aittajarvi, he was second quickest when the test was repeated as the points-paying powerstage to secure fourth overall.

Irishman Breen scored big points in the powerstage run

BRYNILDSEN'S PREMONITION LEADS TO TOKSPORT CHANCE

Eyvind Brynildsen was a late addition to the Arctic Rally Finland entry after his dream, quite literally, came true.

Brynildsen, 33, had tried but failed to secure the cash needed for a Toksport WRT drive in Lapland.

But after dreaming that team boss Serkan Duru would call him to tell him he was needed to replace one of the squad's regular WRC 2 drivers on the event, Brynildsen mentioned this to Duru during a subsequent phone call.

Convinced that dreams don't come true, however, Brynildsen headed to Rally Finnskog in his native Norway where he was entered in an ageing Volkswagen Golf MkIII Kit Car.

Then, shortly before heading to bed in his camper van prior to a planned full day of rallying, Brynildsen's phone rang. Marco Bulacia, who was due to drive a Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo on the event, had encountered an issue with his visa on arrival into Finland and Toksport needed a replacement driver.

"Serkan called me and said, 'your dreams are about to come true'," Brynildsen explained. "He told me I need to leave for Rovaniemi because Bulacia is not able to get into Finland. I found a private clinic in Oslo for the Covid test but I needed a co-driver."

Rules normally allow teams to change a driver or a co-driver, never both. Anticipating this, Brynildsen began his test on Monday with Marcelo Der Ohannesian, Bulacia's regular co-driver, before confirmation came through that Veronica Engan, who has worked with Brynlidsen in the past, could also take part on the event as well.

"It was three or four days of heavy stress but I don't know how much people believe how much I appreciate this. It's a dream that everybody wants and my dream came true."

Brynildsen repaid Toksport's faith in him by finishing fourth in WRC 2.

Brynilsden answered a last-minute call up to tackle WRC 2

whole stage and not over-push and we were always clean," Neuville said after winning SS8.

Having admired Neuville's tyre strategy on Saturday from afar, Rovanpera made the bold move to take two spares for Sunday's relatively short, 27.92-mile leg to give himself the best possible chance of holding onto second and winning the powerstage.

Rovanpera beat Neuville by 0.1s on SS9 before going 0.4s faster on SS10 to take second – his best WRC result to date by 2.3s and, with it, the championship lead.

"I made a mistake and we were not in the optimal pace," said Rovanpera.

"But I have to say I was pushing the whole weekend, maximum all the time."

For Neuville, who heads to the planned third round in Croatia in April – another WRC newcomer – four points behind Rovanpera, third place nevertheless represented a good result for the Belgian.

Competing with new co-driver Martijn Wydaeghe for only the second time in WRC, Neuville was the highest-seeded finisher having run third on leg one. But it was a "communication issue" rather than his higher road position in comparison to Tanak and Rovanpera that helped to count against a Neuville victory.

"Martijn is speaking French and his native language is Flemish," Neuville explained. "The intercom system was made on the voice of my former co-driver and I struggled sometimes to clearly here the difference between a 50 and a 70 for example. I am hesitating or there were places where I lost time way too much because I understand the corner was slower than it was. It maybe cost us second position at the end."

Aside from the overall battle, WRC 2 and WRC 3 honours were up for grabs. World Rally Car refugee Esapekka Lappi took the former with ease while Teemu Assunmaa beat Egon Kaur by 4.2s in WRC3.

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FEATURE

Images: Max Coates/VRRC

Power Maxed has a fresh approach

TAKING ONLINE TIN-TOP RACING TO AN EVER WIDER AUDIENCE

Just as esports racing is growing all the time, so is the link it has to real-world competition. Mike Holder investigates a new link to the British Touring Car Championship

You may not have noticed it but the touring car season has started. The esports phenomenon that caught alight last year is still going strong and, in many ways, it has morphed into a more professional scene.

There are plenty of leagues catering for amateurs and enthusiasts, but so too are a number of championships operating on a more professional basis. Take as a prime example the MSL FastR Touring Car eSeries with Power Maxed Racing, powered by Virtual Reality Racing Club (VRRC).

With pukka British Touring Car Championship team Power Maxed Racing's involvement and a mix of real and sim racers on the grid, the championship is 10 races old and delivering Saturday lunchtime thrills all broadcast live on YouTube.

The championship is operated by Rich Hayden's VRRC, an idea that came to him while recovering from a nasty horse-riding accident that led to months of recuperation and leaving his role as UK & Ireland sales director at Acer Computers.

But, what does Power Maxed Racing get out of this? PMR's commercial manager Si McNally says: "It is a way of linking the sim and real worlds together. We firstly want to emphasise that this isn't a game, but proper racing and our commitment to the sim world is illustrated by the top sim racer from this championship getting a test in our Volkswagen Racing Cup car.

"If we can take someone and let them progress to real-world racing, that is a great achievement.

"We're looking at this as a long-term project, but it has lots of benefits," McNally continues. "For one thing, it gives fans some racing at this time of year but it also increases exposure of Power Maxed. There is also an opportunity to cement relations between VRRC and PMR."

That relationship isn't just a commercial one, as Hayden explains. "If you go to an athletics event for example, there is the athlete and his trainer and they are doing exercises and activities relevant to his competition. Why not do that in motor racing? I'd taken, pre-Covid, my unit with two high-end sims in it, to 750 Motor Club-organised events and drivers could use it to keep sharp between qualifying and the race and fans could have a go as well. We are looking at doing something similar at BTCC events with PMR."

So, picture it. Jason Plato could spend half an hour on the simulator before race one, leaps into his Astra, and you take his place at the sim.

The championship, which runs on the Assetto Corsa platform, is for TCR-spec cars, which in a sense might seem odd given that PMR is a team in the NGTC-spec BTCC, but there are clear reasons for the decision.

"First of all," explains McNally, "we don't want to antagonise the BTCC, so it allows us to keep our distance. It also links us to a different type of car and proves that we are not just a BTCC team, even though we've long had a presence in the Volkswagen Racing Cup."

Look at the higher-profile championships and there are big names in esports, such as Williams, Ferrari and Red Bull all with drivers competing in major events. Indeed, Jack Keithley, a member of the Williams esports team, is on the grid for the MSL Fast R Touring Car eSeries with Power Maxed Racing powered by VRRC, relishing the chance to go to against real-world drivers.

Perversely, although a number of sim racers gravitated to that discipline because they didn't have the funds for real world racing, they are now in a position to earn money as the bigger events have decent prize money and PMR is looking at having its own team in the future as well.

"We can see the benefits of having a presence in the esports world," says McNally, "and no-one else from the BTCC is really looking at it. It definitely has value for us as a brand and we want to progress that."

With a high-end sim costing between £15-20,000 this isn't beer money, but it is still much cheaper than real-world racing and can bring people into this area of the sport or help them progress via prizes such as PMR's VW Cup test. Indeed, PMR is now looking at building and marketing its own sims to not only use internally for driver training but then also sell to the public (and other drivers) as an income generator.

For PMR, not just a team but also an automotive brand and also a race-winning BTCC team to add its name to this series, it had to be professional, something Hayden is keen to emphasise: "I have Andy Ringland as a clerk of the course who looks at driver protests and we want to stamp out poor driving. It is easy in a virtual world to bounce off people and get away with it, but we needed to make this professional."

Hayden identified the growth of esports racing back in 2017 and saw the potential, but realised that it was considered a game and not linked closely enough to the real world and he could see ways of changing that. His touring car championship is funded by generous backing from FastR, subsiding entry fees, and MSL, but drivers pay £245 to enter the eight-event, 16-round championship, with a choice of seven TCR cars to race with liveries designed by VRRC. In addition, Hayden has a tech expert on hand to help drivers with their software to make sure it is all working as it should. This assuredly isn't a game.

Then you add in Mike Yau's Simply Race company to broadcast it and choose from camera angles, making it look as real as possible, and commentary from ITV's BTCC voice David Addison adds to that real-world feel.

What started as a bit of fun in lockdown has rapidly grown into a proper, professional championship and together PMR and VRRC are set to expand further. Watch this space. ■

> **"The aim is to take a gamer to real racing"**
>
> **Si McNally**

The circuits are the same as on the regular UK touring car roster

A clerk of the course keeps tabs on the close-quarters competition

Real world racers like Senna Proctor (centre) take part in the series

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

Tom Kristensen, Dario Franchitti and Greg Moore

We did our best, but with Ian Titchmarsh there's only so much of his motorsport knowledge breadth you can cover in a single readers' Q&A. So here's a bit more from him.

This is Peter Windsor's, sadly former, online series *The Flying Lap*. Titchmarsh is a guest and a fitting one, as on this episode Windsor and Titchmarsh alongside the equally adept Jonathan Williams seek to resolve the eternal debate of who were the best drivers who never made it to Formula 1. They narrow down the full breadth of history to a 26-driver 'F1 grid'.

They don't scrimp on detail, as not only do they include those who actively sought F1 but – for various reasons – didn't make it, there's also those from America's top racing echelons, star rally drivers, plus candidates from elsewhere...

You can watch the entire fascinating and rich 68-minute discussion at: youtube.com/watch?v=OYggoKsqJoQ or from searching '#18 The Flying Lap with Peter Windsor: Top 26 Drivers Never to Have Made it to F1'. Or if you'd rather cut to the chase you can watch Titchmarsh give his 'grid' rundown at: youtube.com/watch?v=A4NHk-ORX40 or via 'TFL #18 Clip: Ian Titchmarsh Announces 'Top 26 Drivers Never To Have Made It To F1".

Graham Keilloh

TV GUIDE

As we limp through the final days of waiting for 2021's Formula 1 testing to get underway, Sky Sports F1 has plenty of retro action for us, and mostly full races, celebrating in turn the triumphs of F1's two most decorated teams: McLaren and Ferrari.

McLaren's homage starts this evening (Thursday) with the mesmeric Monaco 2008 win by MN's official favourite British F1 driver, Lewis Hamilton (Thursday, 2100hrs-2330hrs). And the Lewis theme continues tomorrow with his 2007 US Grand Prix victory (Friday, 2200hrs-0000hrs).

On Saturday we have 1998's Mika Hakkinen v Michael Schumacher Suzuka title showdown (1300hrs-1530hrs), highlights of John Watson's 1981 Silverstone triumph (1530hrs-1615hrs), Australia in 2003 (1615hrs-1800hrs), 1984's Austrian GP (1850hrs-1935hrs) then Monaco in 1993 (1935hrs-2020hrs). After another chance to see 2007's US race (2120hrs-2320hrs) it's concluded with 2011's Hungarian race (2320hrs-0150hrs).

Ferrari takes over on Sunday with highlights of Jean Alesi's 1995 Canada win (1130hrs-1215hrs), the full 2007 Bahrain race (1215hrs-1430hrs), Valencia 2012 (1430hrs-1645hrs), another Suzuka Hakkinen-Schumacher title showdown, from 2000 (1715hrs-1915hrs), the 2008 Italian GP (1915hrs-2115hrs – the victor was Ferrari-powered!), Germany in 2000 (2215hrs-0030hrs). It ends this time with 2003's Silverstone race (Monday, 00300hrs-0215hrs).

Graham Keilloh

Hamilton is celebrated

LIVE TV

NASCAR Pennzoil 400
- **Race:** Sunday, 2000hrs-0030hrs, Premier Sports 2

Ferrari Challenge World Final, Misano
- **Race 1:** Friday, 1410hrs-1510hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Race 2:** Saturday, 1135hrs-1235hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Race 3:** Sunday, 1010hrs-1110hrs, Sky Sports F1

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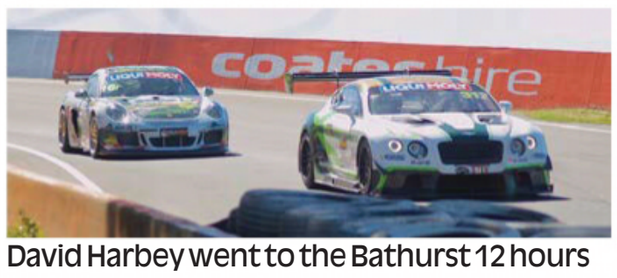
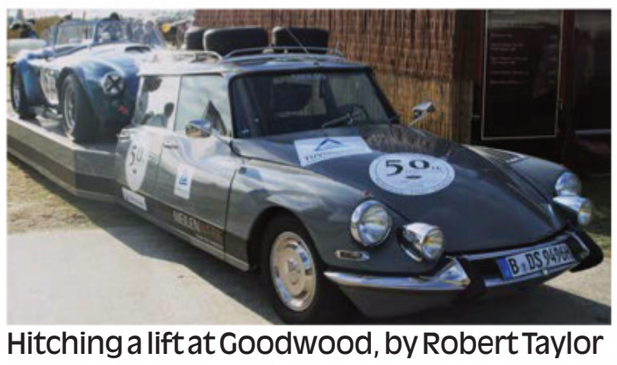
ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

Gary Hill chose Mike Stokoe's second favourite make of car here: Rover first, then Jaguar...



David Harbey went to the Bathurst 12 hours



Hitching a lift at Goodwood, by Robert Taylor

Rich Cranston's shot of a flying BTCC racer

Neil Ormston's shot from Quarry at Combe

On the limit at Combe, from Neil Ormston

NEXT WEEK — OUT THURSDAY, MARCH 11

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READERS' Q&A: NICK TANDY

Le Mans winner and sportscar supremo speaks to Motorsport News

Inside the Jordan Racing Team

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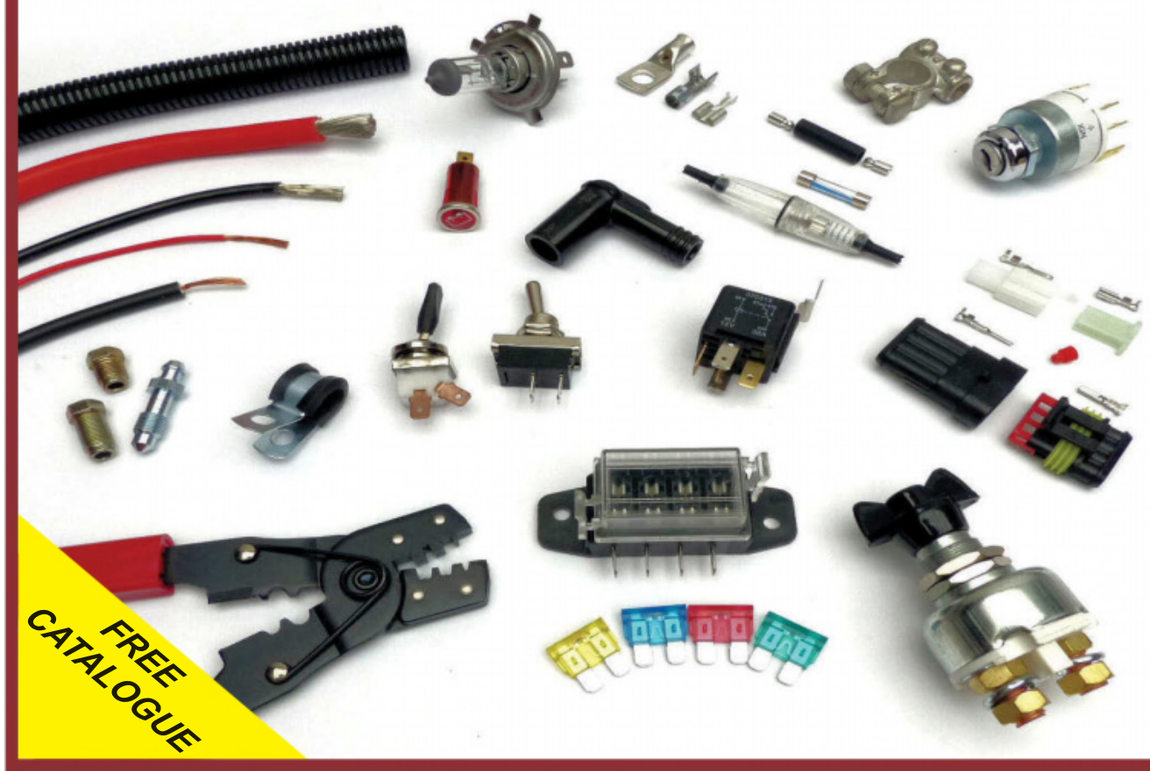

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